

**THE APPLICABILITY OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN  
TERTIARY PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE:  
A CASE STUDY OF MKOBA TEACHERS COLLEGE.**

by

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## DECLARATION

Name: Jeffrey Masango

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Degree: Master of Arts in Religious Studies

**The applicability of the phenomenological method to the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in Tertiary Primary Teacher Education institutions in Zimbabwe: A case study of Mkoba Teachers College.**

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

15 December 2019

DATE

## **SUMMARY**

This research is a case study conducted at Mkoba Teachers' College from 2017 to 2019 which aimed at assessing the applicability of the phenomenological method in the teaching and learning of Religious Education (R.E) in Teacher Education institutions in Zimbabwe. It sought to change the trainee teachers' negative attitude to and increase their knowledge of African Indigenous Religions (A.I.Rs) through the phenomenological method. The research discusses the concept of Religious Education (R.E) and reviews literature on R. E, history of R. E from pre-colonial to post-colonial Zimbabwe and recent researches in RE in order to gain insights on historical developments and current trends in the field of RE. It involves ten participants of Christian background selected through purposive sampling and uses qualitative methods of generating data. Despite the challenges, the phenomenological method was helpful in equipping participants with knowledge and positive attitude to A.R. The research makes recommendations and suggests areas for further study.

## **KEY TERMS**

Applicability

Phenomenology

Phenomenological method

Teaching

Learning

Religious Education

Moral Education

Tertiary

Primary

Teacher Education

## **DEDICATION**

To my father, the late Kadiyas Masango, and my mother, the late Tariro Washaya Vambe



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. G.J. Mason for the valuable guidance and insights throughout the course of this study. I am also indebted to Mkoba Teachers College intake eighteen and twenty trainee teachers who took part in this research. Their readiness to participate within the limited time that was at their disposal gave me opportunities to develop new insights into the topic. I also want to sincerely thank my family for the financial and moral support, and the University of South Africa for the financial support rendered.

## ABSTRACT

This research is a case study conducted at Mkoba Teachers' College from 2017 to 2019 which aimed at establishing the applicability of the phenomenological method to the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Tertiary Primary Teacher Education institutions in Zimbabwe. The majority of the student teachers were Christians and had a negative attitude towards African Indigenous Religions (A.I.Rs). They also showed little knowledge of concepts in African Religions yet the old and new syllabus in RME and Family, Religion and Moral Education (FAREME) respectively required them to use the multi-faith approach and to view all religions they may encounter in the classroom with equal importance. This research sought to determine the extent to which the phenomenological method can change the student teachers' negative attitude to/ and increase their knowledge of A.I.Rs, thus preparing them for the task of religious education in future. In the theoretical framework, the researcher discussed the concept of Religious Education (R.E) and reviewed related literature on approaches to R.E, the history of R.E in pre-colonial and post-colonial periods in Zimbabwe and recent researches in R.E in order to gain insights on historical developments and current trends in the field of R.E. The researcher selected ten (10) participants who belonged to various Christian denominations using the purposive sampling strategy. Qualitative methods of generating data used were unstructured interviews, field work, both participant and non participant observation, and focus group discussion. After field work, participants applied the phenomenological method to the *bira* ceremony and discussed religious artifacts encountered during field work. On the whole, the phenomenological method increased the participants' knowledge of A.I.Rs and significantly changed their attitude towards it. Despite the participants' strong Christian background, they were able to separate the demands of their commitment to personal faith and the requirements of the phenomenological method. The study makes some recommendations, some of which are the use of the phenomenological method together with the multi-faith and comparative religion approaches in the College R.M.E curriculum.

## **ACRONYMS**

A.A.C	African Apostolic Church
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
A.I.Cs	African Initiated Churches
A.I.Rs	African Indigenous Religions
A.I.R	African Indigenous Religion
R.E	Religious Education
A.S.C	Apostolic Sabbath Church
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
D.T.E	Department of Teacher Education
ETM	End Time Message
FAREME	Family, Religion and Moral Education
FRMS	Family, Religion and Moral Studies
JAM	Jesus is Alive Ministries
JMAC	Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church
P.S.B	Professional Studies syllabus 'B'
R.M.E.	Religious and Moral Education
R.M.S.	Religious and Moral Studies
SDAC	Seventh Day Adventist Church
UAFC	United Apostolic Faith Church
ZAOGA	Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Mkoba Teachers College is a teacher education institution which trains pre-service primary school teachers in Zimbabwe. It is an associate College of the University of Zimbabwe situated in Gweru; the capital city of the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The college enrolls post ordinary level students, with a minimum of five (5) ordinary level passes.

This research was carried out with two groups of student teachers namely intake eighteen (18) and twenty (20). Intake eighteen (18) student teachers pursued a three - year teacher education program comprising of the first two terms studying in college, five (5) terms doing teaching practice in Zimbabwe primary schools, and the final two (2) terms studying in college (2-5-2). Intake twenty (20) student teachers followed a three year teacher education program comprising the first year of study at college, another year of practical teaching in the schools, and the final year of study at college (3-3-3).

In order to successfully complete the course, students of the two intakes should satisfy examiners in the following areas; Theory of Education, Professional studies, Main subject and Teaching Practice (University of Zimbabwe: Handbook for quality assurance in associate teachers' colleges, 2013) and are awarded a Diploma in Education from the University of Zimbabwe; one of the universities in the country. The University, through the Department of Teacher Education (D.T.E) examines the students and is responsible of quality assurance.

In Professional Studies syllabus 'B' (P.S.B), students are taught methodology for teaching and learning in all the subjects taught in the Primary School. All the students are also required to choose a main subject whose aim is to deepen content in all the subjects offered in the Primary School. This research focused on students who were studying Professional Studies syllabus 'B' in Religious and Moral Education (R.M.E.) and those studying Religious and Moral Studies (R.M.S.) as their main subject. The participants were the researcher's students in main subject and Professional Studies.

A preliminary survey I conducted in 2017 at the College showed that the majority of intake 18 student teachers studying R.M.E. and those taking R.M.S. as their main subject were Christians belonging to various Christian denominations. As professing Christians, they had a negative attitude towards African Indigenous Religions (A.I.Rs).

African Indigenous Religions refer to the religions of the indigenous people of Africa whose origins date back to antiquity. These are religious beliefs and practices that the people of Africa maintained and practiced well before the advent of Western missionaries and colonialists in Africa and after. Some scholars use the term African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) (Shorter,1975 and Deke, 2017) to refer to the same phenomenon. Shorter (ibid) notes that although these religions were different and “self contained”(Shorter, ibid:1), they influenced each other and shared many facets in common such that it is safe to refer to them as one religion and use the singular noun ‘religion’.The same author justifies the use of the term ‘traditional’ for the reason that this religion is strongly connected with the past and African peoples’ history. However, despite the connections with the past, this religion has adapted to modern life and therefore is a “living tradition” and continues to influence both its adherents and professing Christians (Shorter, ibid:1).

Contemporary scholars prefer to use the term African Indigenous Religions (A.I.Rs) arguing that although the indigenous religions of Africa are similar, they differ according to culture. They also argue that the use of the adjective ‘traditional’ in African Traditional Religion may convey the judgmental connotation that these religions are old fashioned or archaic. In this research, the researcher will use the terms African Indigenous Religions and African Indigenous Religion (A.I.R)

The prevalence of Christianity among the pre-service students was likely to cut across other main subjects that the students studied at the college. This Christian outlook was a result of two factors namely Christian education and conversion to/and upbringing in the Christian faith. These aspects were the primary contributory factors to the students’ negative attitude towards A.I.Rs. Many Christian denominations today especially the Pentecostal churches have a hostile attitude to A.I.Rs. This attitude was a product of the influence of racist Western culture, biblical and theological teachings of the Christian denominations that the students experienced during their life time.

The schools of the colonial period in Zimbabwe were an extension of the Christian missionaries' work which aimed at converting African children to the Christian faith. The missionaries also wanted the school children to adopt western values and thought patterns, hence they deliberately and consistently attacked A.I.Rs and culture. Most of the student teachers at the college were influenced by this colonial Christian legacy hence the negative attitude to A.I.Rs.

The post- colonial period in Zimbabwe as in many African countries saw a shift in the aims and objectives of education including Religious Education (R.E.). After the political independence of many African countries, it was envisaged that the subject should re-educate the African child to value his/her own religion and cultural values so that they redefine, rediscover their history and believe in themselves. The subject was also required to make school children appreciate and tolerate religious diversity(Ter Harr,1990). This called for change not only in the content of R.E. but also a change in the methodology.

The new R.E syllabus that was developed in Zimbabwe after independence in 1980 and the study materials were to be guided by the child-book-child and the experiential approaches. For the same reason, the current R.M.E infant syllabus (grade 1-2) (Ministry of Education, 1987) and the new Family, Religion and Moral Education (FAREME) syllabuses' approach is essentially multi-faith in approach and content(Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2015). The new FAREME syllabus recognises African Indigenous Religion (A.I.R) as one of the five (5) religions to be studied in the Primary School and as a source of genuine, authentic and valuable religious learning material. This research sought to develop in student teachers, knowledge, an open mind, the right skills and attitude to A.I.Rs through the phenomenological approach to the study of religion thereby keeping them abreast with current trends in R.E.

But for this to succeed, teacher education institutions should take the initiative to include in their curricular for Religious Education methodology and content that equips the pre-service students with the right education to undertake the task. As professional teachers of religion in the making, there is need to develop in them the right knowledge, skills, attitude and dispositions that make them competent religious educators who keep abreast with



current trends in Religious Education. In this regard, this research sought to establish the extent to which phenomenology of religion can achieve this.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

A survey I conducted in 2017 and 2019 revealed that most intake 18 and 20 student teachers studying R.M.S and R.M.E had a strong Christian background and showed a negative attitude towards A.I.Rs. Shorter (1975) notes that the type of education that students get in the schools and tertiary institutions and the general environment compel the African Christian student to leave his commitment to A.I.Rs “long before he can acquire the techniques necessary for a sophisticated understanding of it” (Shorter, 1975:8). These students looked down upon those few who believed in these religions who, as a result, do not readily come out in the open for fear of reprisals. Ter Harr (ibid) argues that the attack on A.I.Rs and culture by western education led to the depreciation of the African’s own religious beliefs and customs

These students publicly made negative comments during discussions when topics on these religions were raised and discussed during lectures. During teaching practice, the student teachers hardly included aspects of A.I.Rs in R.M.E classes. When they attempted to do this, the information and concepts were often wrong. For instance , during a discussion on the concept ‘Ancestral spirits’ ( FAREME syllabus, op. cit:30 ) most of the students thought that these spirits were evil. During teaching practice in Primary Schools and during lectures in college, the students showed ignorance of the basic tenets of A.I.Rs. and lack of confidence in teaching concepts on the same religion. Sealey (1985) argues that teachers feel safe when they know the facts, have sound knowledge and competence in the subject. Otherwise, despite being African, the students “come to the study of his subject as much as an outsider” (Sealey, 1985:8).

The students showed bias towards Christianity and during Teaching Practice, they did not treat the religions and denominations of their pupils in the classrooms with the same importance they attached to Christianity; a situation that does not do justice to the diverse religious experiences of their learners. Such a scenario militates against the aims and objectives of the R.M.E Primary School infant ( grade 1-2) syllabus and the FAREME

syllabus. Aims three (3) and four (4) of the infant syllabus help the learners to know about the other religions they are likely to encounter in Zimbabwe, so that they understand them and appreciate their similarities. Through this understanding, learners will respect and tolerate other people with beliefs different from theirs. Objective (c) of the same syllabus at grade two (2) level under life theme three (3) helps learners to “understand and appreciate the variety of cultures and beliefs among the people of Zimbabwe and even the world” ( Infant syllabus. Grade 1 and 2, Religious and Moral Education, 1985:5).

If applicable, phenomenology of religion as a method of studying religion will help pre-service and in-service teachers to achieve the syllabus aims and objectives. This method of studying religion will equip trainee teachers with the pre-requisite skills of bracketing out or suspension of all preconceived ideas about A.I.Rs, thus developing in them the right attitude to other religions different from their own ( Cox,1992). Phenomenology of religion emphasizes the need to study religion as accurately as possible through the study of religious phenomena which must be allowed to speak for themselves. It begins with the simple but accurate description of such phenomena; through reliance on first - hand information and being guided by the adherents and moves on to the ability to derive meaning from patterns of the adherents’ beliefs, religious experiences and expressions.

This research seeks to establish if the phenomenological method will enable student teachers to acquire correct knowledge of other religions especially A.I.Rs ( about which they show conspicuous ignorance), and eliminate negative judgmental comments and attitudes about them. It will investigate the impact of the tools of phenomenology of religion such as empathy, elimination of bias, and studying religion from inside with the intention to see if the student teachers will become disciplined, fair, knowledgeable, undogmatic and objective seekers of truth about the faith of their learners. This will promote religious understanding and tolerance among the teachers and learners. This, in my view is the hallmark of professionalism in R.E.

The new FAREME Grade 3-7 syllabus makes the same thrust of the need for adopting the multi-faith approach and being tolerant. Aims 3.2 and 3.7 develop in learners an appreciation of the existence of the Supreme Being as understood in various religions. It also fosters the virtues of respect and tolerance for other people’s religions, cultures and

ways of life. Objectives 4.2,4.3, 4.4 and 4.9 of the same syllabus are multi-faith in nature and require the learners to draw materials from various religions and to compare and contrast religious teachings and practices of these religions ( Family, Religion, and Moral Education Syllabus, 2015:4-5).

These syllabus expectations cannot be achieved unless teacher education institutions equip trainee teachers with the appropriate pedagogy and the right frame of mind to do justice to the subject in a multi-faith setting. As discussed above, the phenomenology of religion is the envisaged approach to the study of A.I.Rs as it seeks to develop in teachers and students of religion an open mind and appreciation of African people's beliefs and values. Though 'eidetic intuition' (Cox, op. cit:19), the teacher and the learners classify religious phenomena into categories and discover the essences of religion ( that is essential and constant qualities that run through various religions).

This will help them realize that religions, though different, have the same essential qualities or structures and therefore serve the same purpose among different peoples. This is an important precondition for religious tolerance. This research sought to establish the other reasons for the students' ignorance and negative attitude to A.I.Rs. and establish whether or not phenomenology of religion, as a method of studying religion can help students understand concepts in A.I.Rs and appreciate these religions.

### **1.3 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Zimbabwe, like many other countries in the region, continent and the world is a multi-faith country. Section 60: (1), and (3) of the country's constitution provides for freedom of thought, religion or belief among other freedoms. It further gives parents or guardians of minor children the right to determine the way they want their children to be brought up in terms of morality and religious beliefs (Parliament of Zimbabwe: Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) ACT). This constitutional provision influences policy in education at all levels including the Primary School in terms of curriculum development and Teacher Education.

At Primary School level, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education policy acknowledges the existence of various religions and their manifestations and ramifications

and recommends the use of the multi-faith approach in the teaching of FAREME as a learning area ( according to the new syllabus). The new syllabus, which was introduced in 2015 is clearly multi faith as shown by its aims, objectives and content. The syllabus introduction reads, “The grade 3-7...syllabus...is designed to promote in learners an awareness and appreciation of different religions practiced in Zimbabwe” ( FAREME syllabus op.cit:1). By so doing, the syllabus aims at promoting tolerance, inclusivity, unity and moral uprightness among the learners. Learners are exposed to the study of various religions “ and their impact on the self, family, community...” ( FAREME Syllabus, ibid:2). Thus the multi-faith approach is explicit and cuts across the whole syllabus. This will bring about unity and peace; the virtues every nation cherishes. The phenomenological method, with its emphasis on openness to religious phenomena and objectivity goes a long way in meeting the requirements of multi-faith RE.

The old R.M.E syllabus grade3-7 ( op. cit.), which is currently being phased out attempts to be multi- faith although many aspects are neo-confessional and show a bias towards the Christian faith. Although the teacher can draw examples from other religions, these religions are implied and are not considered on equal footing with the Christian faith. However, the old infant (grade1-2) syllabus (op.cit.) is more experiential and multi – faith while the Junior (grade 3-7) syllabus is explicitly chistocentric. It is due to these shortcomings that the new FAREME syllabus was drafted as an improvement of the old syllabus.

The two syllabuses, that is the old and new are currently being used in the Primary School and Teacher Education institutions including Mkoba; with the old syllabus being phased out gradually. The student teachers with a strong Christian background, who are the focus of this research found more comfort in the old grade 3-7 syllabus than in the new FAREME syllabus because it identified with their Christian education and upbringing. They therefore found it easier to teach as compared to the new syllabus which required them to master concepts in A.I.Rs together with the four (4) other religions. The students’ attitudes and dispositions described above, if displayed in the classroom; consciously or unconsciously are tantamount to discriminating pupils on the basis of religious beliefs which contravenes The Education Act, Chapter 25: 04 part II (4).

It is therefore imperative that teacher education institutions prepare and produce student teachers with the right skills, attitudes and the requisite knowledge to undertake the teaching of the subjects in the best interest of national goals and aspirations. This may be done through exposing them to the phenomenological method of the study and teaching of religion that eliminates bias and confessional attitudes and practices. Schools Council working paper 36 (1971) argues that when teachers use the phenomenological approach to Religious Education and avoid the old confessional approach, then the subject will be considered of more value in the schools.

Due to religious piety and commitment to the Christian faith, most of the college students displayed a confessional and pious attitude towards the Christian faith, thus confirming the concerns raised by the reference above. This attitude was made more conspicuous by the increased influence of the Christian faith on the students and people of Zimbabwe today. It is deemed fashionable and civilized to be a Christian.

Wynne in Ter Harr (op.cit.) postulates that the new insights in education require a new approach to Religious Education in Schools, one that is educational and not biased towards any particular faith. Since the 1970's, studies and researches to improve methodology in R.E have been done. Erricker, Lowndes, and Bellchambers (2011) discuss various initiatives that have been done in the field of R.E namely Michael Grimmitt's conceptual bridges approach of the early 1970's, the Warwick Religious Education Project of Robert Jackson and Eleanor Nesbitt of the 1980's which focused on approaching R.E through ethnography, Trevor Cooling's Stapleford Project of 1986 which recommended the identification of concepts as an approach to Christian R.E, the Experiential Learning of David Hay (1996) which emphasized that good R.E should relate to the child's religious experience. The Children's Worldview Project (1993) of Clive and Jane Erricker identified children's experiences as the starting point in good R.E.

Erricker et al. (ibid:42-75) developed the Conceptual Enquiry Approach for Primary School R.E. The approach encourages teaching and learning through concepts and the development of skills through processes rather than simple acquisition of religious knowledge. They warn against teacher prejudices and religious preferences and admit that "...our own prejudices or preferences cannot be underestimated, but equality of

opportunity is a pupil's right and our personal prejudices cannot be allowed to negate that right" (Erricker, et al. *ibid*:167).

Emphasis in Teacher Education should be on methodology and content that equips the pre-service students with the right education to undertake the task of R.E. Smart ( cited in Schools Council Working Paper 36: *op.cit.*) notes that for this to succeed teacher educators should concentrate on teaching methodology rather than content more so when time is limited( as is the case with the current 2-5-2 teacher education program). He further argues that teachers are not fountains of knowledge, but specialists in the art of learning who should concentrate on teaching 'how'( that is methodology) rather than 'that' ( that is content). Smart calls this "the ability to handle the tools and the raw materials of learning"(Schools Council Working Paper 36, *ibid*:74).

Once the student teachers acquire these skills, they will cascade them to the Primary School pupils which will make R.E worthwhile and enriching. This research study sought to take the initial steps towards this noble cause by teaching student teachers how to study and teach religion through the phenomenological method. It sought to instill in them the requisite skills and the right attitudes to the study and teaching of A.I.Rs and examines the impact of the phenomenological method on students with a strong Christian background who have been using a christo- centric R.M.E syllabus in schools and at college.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research study was guided by the following questions;

1. Why do student teachers with a strong Christian background misconstrue concepts in A.I.Rs and have a negative attitude towards it?
2. Will the use of the phenomenological method help student teachers with a strong Christian background understand and appreciate concepts in A.I.Rs?
3. Is participant observation in rituals and ceremonies in A.I.Rs possible among student teachers with a strong Christian background?
4. Can student teachers with a strong Christian background understand the 'religious other' through empathy?
5. Is religious neutrality (epoche) possible in Religious Education?

## **1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Guided by the above research questions, the purpose of the study is to;

1. promote the right attitudes to, and correct understanding of concepts in A.I.Rs among trainee teachers,
2. assess the successes and challenges of the phenomenological method in Teacher Education in the field of Religious Education and inform key role-players,
3. suggest a more effective implementation strategy of the phenomenological method in Religious Education in Primary Teacher Education 2-5-2 and 3-3-3 programs.

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

This introductory chapter outlined the background of this research study that revealed the negative attitude towards A.I.Rs of intake eighteen (18) and twenty (20) trainee teachers at Mkoba Teachers' College in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. The negative attitude, coupled with misconceptions about the same religions necessitated this research whose major objective was to assess the applicability of the phenomenological method in reducing or possibly eliminating the problems altogether. The researcher postulates that the success of the method will benefit Teacher Education, the Primary School curriculum development in Religious Education and achieve national goals and aspirations in terms of the development of African religious identity, religious tolerance and national unity.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW.**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the theory of R.E and reviews related literature. It examines the teaching and learning of R.E in order for the researcher to understand the approaches and methods used in the past and present so that he can project into the future in the light of this historical study. This will include phenomenology of religion as a method of studying religion. The review will be done in search of the best practices and current trends in R. E . To achieve this, related literature will be reviewed. The impact of Christianity in Africa, more specifically among the sampled students will also be examined in order to fully appreciate the students' current attitudes and lack of knowledge of concepts in A. I.Rs.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This sub-section focuses on the theory of R.E. Many religious educationists have developed pedagogical strategies and ideas in the field of R.E. The main purpose of theoretical framework is to guide the researcher through the insights gained from a review of theory in carrying out the research study. Throughout the history of the study of religion and R.E, many approaches have been put forward by scholars and religious educationists to guide both R.E teachers and students of religion. Such approaches include the confessional or dogmatic approach, the Neo-confessional approach, the phenomenological or undogmatic approach, the experiential approach, the Child book child, the multi-faith approach, the interpretive approach and the conceptual inquiry approach. A study of these approaches helps shed light on the historical developments in the study of religion as a broad phenomenon and R.E as a school subject. The teacher's choice of approach will depend on the aims and objectives the teacher wants to achieve in R.E.

Religion by its very nature is a personal and subjective experience. It addresses the believers' deep emotions, feelings and spiritual needs. It is therefore imperative that the study of religion should do justice to the believer in terms of the above mentioned aspects. Religion belongs to the realm of metaphysical reality, that is to say, even though its claims cannot be proved empirically, its impact on the believers' social and spiritual life is real. The choice of approach to use depends on the aims and objectives one wishes to achieve. The schools council working paper 36 ( op. cit.) argues that when we discuss the question of what approach to use, we should ask ourselves the following important question; is it possible to be objective about religion or is religion a subjective experience incompatible with principles governing education? Put differently; is it possible to understand a religion that one does not subscribe to, or to understand a believer's emotions, and feelings during worship?

For R.E to be worthwhile and relevant, it should address a nation's goals and aspirations in terms of the transmission of that nation's religious heritage and moral values to the younger generation. The aims of R.E in the colonial period were different from the aims of the same subject in the post colonial period, and so are the approaches and method applied. Erricker, Lowndes, and Bellechambers (2011:22) say good R.E should prepare



learners for life experiences and should help learners think about, analyse and evaluate issues in human experience that relate to them. In order to achieve this, teachers need to use approaches that enable pupils to acquire the skills above in ways that are most effective and efficient. Thus, the question of approaches to use remains crucial.

## **2.2.1 THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Many religious educationists and scholars for example, Smart (1973,1968), Cox (1966), Cox (1992), Loukes (1966), Goldman (1965) et cetera, have propounded various theories of R.E. Sealey (1985) divides theories of R.E into two categories namely theories concerning the nature of religion in education and theories concerning the function of religion in education.

### **2.2.1.1 Theories concerning the nature of religion in education**

This category deals with how religion can best be characterised for educational purposes. Smart (cited in Sealy, 1985) proposes the use of the phenomenological approach to the study of religion (Schools Council Working Paper 36, op. cit:43; Grimmit, 1973:27 and Holley, 1978:171). Smart noted seven categories common to religion (Christianity and Buddhism). In studying these various categories, the student of religion should get to the ‘implicit religion’ which describes the ‘ deeper value questions’ of religion that is the meaning of religion to the believers. Implicit religion means the ultimate meaning religion has to its adherents (Sealey, op. cit:32). Smart argues that since values also address the question of ‘ultimate value’, learners should also study moral values. Concerning the phenomenological approach to the study of religion, Smart says, “The main characteristic of this style is to draw attention away from a confessional and dogmatic form of teaching religion and to focus instead on the various phenomena of religious experience in a more objective manner” (Smart, 1968:13 cited in Sealy, *ibid*:33).

This calls for the teacher of religion and the learners to be impartial and sympathetic to all the religions that they may be required to teach and learn. For teachers to be able to do this, teacher education institutions must make a deliberate and concerted effort to include in their curricula for R.E requisite pedagogical skills and content enrichment

that teachers will cascade to their learners. These skills and subject knowledge will in turn assist learners to move away from the confessional way of thinking about religion towards an understanding of implicit religion. This will also make the teacher of religion more confident and professional. Sealy( *ibid*:1) correctly notes, “...we tend to feel ‘safe’ with a curriculum subject once we know the facts and have a fair degree of competence within the area”.

Smart calls this approach to R.E the “parahistorical’ approach that “transcends the informative” (Smart, 1968:13&95, cited in Sealy, *ibid*:33). For Smart, implicit religion refers to the religious world-view of the believers that is created in them from the fact that believers interpret every aspect of life from a religious perspective. In phenomenology of religion, (according to Smart) it is not desirable for the student of religion to seek to define or qualify categories in religion such as ritual, or doctrine as religious or not. The R.E teacher must consider the intention of the believers for him/her to qualify phenomena as religious or not, that is the meaning an activity has to the person or people taking part in it. Thus, “ religion has to be tied back to religion and religious phenomena as they manifest themselves” (Smart, 1970:4). The principle of intentionality and the need to let religious phenomena speak for themselves was emphasised by many phenomenologists of religion as will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

One of the principles of the phenomenological method is the avoidance of bias towards a particular religion. This can be either implicit or explicit, by word or deed. This is particularly important today due to the multi-faith and multi-cultural nature of our classes in the schools. Current trends in R.E emphasise the need to promote understanding of religion in its broad and various manifestations. The change of name from Religious Instruction, Scripture and Bible Knowledge in the colonial period, to Religious Education, Religious and Moral Education, and more recently to Family, Religion and Moral Education in the post –colonial period emphasises the need for the subject to be educational as opposed to being evangelistic and confessional. R.E should educate children in religion in order to promote ‘religious understanding’( Wilson,1971; Holley,1978;Sealy,1985; Ter Harr, 1995).

Holley (1978) argues that man as a spiritual being is able to understand the spiritual world through religious understanding. Through the tools of scholarship in R.E namely empathy and avoiding making value judgments, teachers and learners can understand the faith of others in ways that proximate the faith of the believers. This constitutes objectivity in R.E. Ter Harr (op. cit.) argues that although religious matters are subjective, it is possible for human beings to be objective about them. Human beings are not imprisoned in their own bias. Through the innate power of imagination, they are able to understand what others think. “ This capacity of self-transcending awareness is the basis for all objective scholarship. It is not the main function of the scholar to express his own beliefs and feelings. His task is chiefly to expound and interpret the beliefs and commitments of other people...” (Ter Harr,ibid:22).

Such education should not stop at religion, but also include moral education. “Since moral education involves educating the emotions, and since certain of these emotions characterise religion, Religious Education falls within the wider sphere of moral education” (Sealy, op. cit:36).

### **2.2.1.2THEORIES CONCERNING THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION IN EDUCATION**

These theories revolve around the function of religion in schools and relate to the content and methodology in R.E. Sealy (op. cit.) and the Schools Council Working Paper 36 (op. cit.) discuss the following approaches that fall under this theory;

#### **2.2.1.2.1Confessional or dogmatic R.E**

This approach is adopted by many believers who want to uphold their faith. When this approach is used by devout Christian teachers, the approach “means the overt teaching and strengthening of the Christian faith, its doctrines and way of life” (Sealy, op. cit:43). Believers of a strong Christian background are often uncompromising and maintain that their religion or denomination is the ‘truth’ and no other. Other faiths are considered false and not legitimate sources of salvation. The teacher who uses this approach indoctrinates pupils and wishes to convert them to his/her faith. It sees

the aim of R.E as intellectual indoctrination. The pupil's religious experiences are not considered.

Barrow ( 1981: 50 cited in Sealy, *ibid*:62) defines indoctrination as, "... the intentional implanting of belief so that it will stick by non-rational means". He further comments that indoctrination is immoral and takes away the learners autonomy and the ability to make decisions. It constitutes religious imperialism and leads to blind commitment. In Zimbabwe where the constitution provides for freedom of worship, indoctrination is unconstitutional and therefore an offence.

Indoctrination by-passes the learner's intelligence and rational thinking, in the process brainwashing and hypnotising the learner. Atkinson ( cited in Sealy, *ibid*:64) remarks, " indoctrination exploits a person as a means to further ends, and this is morally unacceptable". This goes against Emmanuel Kant's moral philosophy which requires us to treat humans as ends in themselves rather than means to some ends ( The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,1995). Some of the student teachers at the college exhibited this approach and were tempted by their piety to propagate their faith to fellow student teachers and pupils they taught.

Nabeeta (cited in Ter Haar,*op. cit.*) argues that R.E should not aim at imparting doctrine, but should aim at promoting the understanding of religion. The pupil's religious experiences should be the starting point for the teacher and not the teacher's religion. Grimmit (cited in Ter Harr, *ibid*:110) remarks, "if the (R.E.) teacher could adopt the attitude of a shopkeeper with wares ...for customers to examine, appreciate...but not feel under any obligation to buy...many of the educational problems connected with R.E would disappear".

The confessional approach runs contrary to current educational practice, is biased and ignores the religious experiences of the learners. Cox (1966:63) correctly notes " to look on R.E as aiming at conversion ... is to put it out of line with present educational theory". Good R.E should consider the religious experience of the learners. For Harold Loukes (cited in Nondo, 1991:16) good teaching "is a process of dialogue

about experience” more so in R.E which is a pursuit of the search of the ultimate meaning of life.

#### **2.2.1.2.2 Neo-confessional RE.**

The proponents of this approach are Ronald Goldman (1965) and Harold Loukes (1966). This approach is an improvement of the confessional approach and tries to make it more accommodative to other faiths. It is open-ended but is still biased towards a particular faith. Sealy (op.cit.) notes that the style of the approach is two-fold; on one hand, it gives special consideration to the learners emotional and cognitive abilities in their understanding of religion but with the aim of making them accept a particular religion. On the other hand, it allows open debate and the study of other religions but only as “tolerated extras” (Schools Council working paper 36, op. cit:30).

Goldman (op. cit.) was a neo-confessional religious educationist. He believed that his book, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (1964) “ provides a realistic picture of the pupil’s development which will enable him to achieve a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and a belief in God which is intellectually satisfying” ( Goldman, ibid: 246). He considered Christianity as, “... the religion that “answers deepest needs of human nature” (Goldman cited in Schools Council working paper 36,op. cit:29). He is, however, against teaching religion especially the Christian faith to children before adolescence.

He argues that young children (infants) have no specific religious needs although they have intellectual and emotional needs. All they need is security and standards of behaviour. He argues that R.E should focus on life themes and explore the young child’s experiences, thus it should be experiential. He suggests that the Bible should be used selectively to illustrate the children’s experience (Goldman cited Schools Council Working Paper 36, op. cit.).

Loukes (op. cit.) maintained that the Bible was central in the development of faith in God. In this approach, other religions may be suggested for study but only in as far as they lead to an understanding of Christianity (The Newsome Report, 1963 and The Plowden Report, 1967).

The Neo-Confessional approach is the approach (similar to Goldman and Loukes) adopted by the Zimbabwean Junior Primary School R.M.E. syllabus, which, though it allows the teacher to draw examples from other religious traditions and acknowledges the existence of other religions, it is biased towards the Christian faith (Religious and Moral Education Junior Syllabus Grades 3-7, op. cit). Most of the content is drawn from the Christian Bible. Other religions, especially A. I.Rs are considered fulfilled in Christianity. For instance, objective three of the R.M.E. infant syllabus reads, “To help the child discover that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever and that He is alive and speaks to the people of Africa through their social, cultural and religious backgrounds” (Religious and Moral Education Junior Syllabus Grades 3-7, ibid:6).

This approach is not acceptable today because it is biased. Students of other religions feel left out. Most of my college students are neo-confessional in that they acknowledge the existence of A.I.Rs but do not give them the same status as Christianity. Like Ronald Goldman and Harold Loukes, they believe that Christianity is the religion that meets the spiritual needs of mankind. The inclusion of other religions should be genuine and must be done on an equal basis. The inclusion of other religions in R.E “... is a natural development of a religious teaching which no longer takes the view that R.E is an arm of the proselytising Christian Church” (Hulmes, 1979 cited in Sealy, 1985:80).

#### **2.2.1.2.3 The anti-dogmatic approach**

As the name implies, this approach is the opposite of the dogmatic approach. It seeks to treat R.E the same way other subjects in the school curriculum are treated. It removes the subjective elements in R.E and argues that the subject should be studied objectively. Thus the subjective elements of religion are underplayed. But doing so

is removing what is at the heart of religion. Removing the believers' feelings and emotions as subject of study would be to miss the essence of religion and would make the subject dry. Religious experiences contain elements of mystery, awe, and fascination that cannot be separated from other aspects of belief. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives considers the affective domain as a legitimate and genuine sphere that educationists should strive to reach during teaching and learning (Izabela, 2010). Thus students and teachers of religion should consider both the subjective and objective elements of religion for the subject to retain its flavour.

#### **2.2.1.2.4 The multi-faith approach**

As the name implies, the approach recognises the existence of various religions in society and requires religious educators to organise teaching and learning in a way that addresses the various religious experiences of their learners. Although the Zimbabwe Junior Primary School Religious and Moral Education syllabus (Grade 3-7: op.cit.) is biased towards Christianity, the Infants' syllabus (Grade 1-2: op.cit.) is multi-faith and allows the teacher to draw examples from various religions hence objective three of the syllabus requires learners to "...know about the other religions they are likely to encounter in Zimbabwe, so that they understand their differences and appreciate their similarities..." (Primary School Religious and Moral Education Syllabus Grade 1 and 2, op. cit:2). The same syllabus aims at making pupils understand their own traditions and religion through discovery and searching, develop their own belief systems. This means that both the content and methodology in teaching should acknowledge the multi-faith nature of the learners in the classroom.

According to Nondo (op. cit.), Religious Education in a multi-faith class should consider both the explicit and the implicit religion of the pupils. He warns that even if some learners do not understand themselves as religious, they nonetheless have their beliefs that must be considered. The implicit religion is what the child or student believes in. It may not be clearly noticeable yet the believer strongly maintains it. The student of religion or the teacher will have to find out these beliefs through close interaction with the believers and pupils, study and interpret their religious

experiences. Implicit R.E should deepen the believer's search for meaning in life in terms of his or her experience. It should investigate the answers offered by religion in terms of the meaning and purpose of life for the adherents. Sealy (op. cit.) notes that this approach may not be taken as a method of teaching as such, but as a believer's way of seeing the world.

Thus religion can manifest itself through many different forms of the believer's religious experience. The task of the teacher is to analyse the religious experience of the student and deepen it through teaching, so that the student has a better understanding of his or her religious experiences (Schools Council Working Paper 36, op. cit.).

The proponent of the implicit religion is Sir Harold Loukes who emphasised learning through experience. To Loukes, good teaching is, "a process of dialogue about experience" (Loukes, cited in Nondo, op. cit:16). This principle applies to R.E as it applies to other subjects. All learning is essentially an analysis of human experience hence according to Loukes, "...unless a subject proceeds from the concrete to the abstract, unless the whole process is set about with sense experience... then it will not be educative " ( Nondo, op. cit:16). Loukes argues that even the Bible is about the human situation or experience. In the light of this argument, the researcher examined closely the implicit religion, that is the religious experience of the research participants and their values in order to establish how they impact on their knowledge and attitude to ARs.

Loukes maintains that the task of the teacher in this approach is to, "set children thinking and searching for meaning in an atmosphere of sympathetic dialogue." (Nondo,op.cit:16). Thus when the researcher analysed the participants' religious experience, he was not value judgmental, but entered into genuine and sincere dialogue, being honest and showing no bias against any religious denomination. These are the same principles the researcher sought to cultivate in them in the study of A.I.Rs through phenomenology of religion.



However, the “implicit religion” approach is rather too liberal and considers everything believers call religious as religious. Learners, especially the younger ones may not develop a proper concept of religion because human experience is different from person to person and its interpretation is also different. This may add to the already existing complications of interpreting religious data. “If it is adopted as the sole approach to R.M.E, it may not do justice to a proper concept of R.E, because it is too easy for the distinctively transcendent elements in religion to escape attention ...” (Sealy, op.cit :59).

There is also imminent danger in this approach of confusing “the nature of religion as it is seen by religious people ... and what pupils may be taught about this” (Sealy, op.cit :59). While teachers may teach learners that religious people see everything through religious spectacles, and interpret everything according to their faith, this may not help learners to taste the religiosity of the believer’s experiences.

Explicit religion is part of the multi-faith approach and targets the explicit or observable phenomena of religion as subject of study. Such phenomena include religious places, religious dress, religious objects, rituals, sacred practitioners and ceremonies. Through the study of these essences, the students can understand the meaning, truth and worth of religion. Selected religious phenomena in A.I.Rs such as sacred places, sacred practitioners, religious objects and ceremonies were studied. Through a comparative study of the common elements in A.I.Rs and Christianity, the participants were able to appreciate the former as a religion in its own right and understand the essence of religion. The study of the explicit phenomena should also be guided by the same principles of neutrality, (not being value judgmental) openness, empathy and sympathy. The major proponents of this approach are Smart (1973), Cox (1966, 1983) and Smith (1975).

Students in teacher education institutions need to adopt the multi-faith approach not only because society is multi-faith, but also because the country’s constitution allows for freedom of worship. It is therefore the responsibility of the Colleges of Education

to develop a teacher with the right skills and attitude to other religions including A.I.Rs and one who can apply the methodologies of the discipline. This is the real groundwork of any subject not the content (Smart, cited in Schools Council Working paper 36, op.cit.). However, despite the merits of the multi-faith approach, it may be a tall order to expect the teacher to keep abreast with the various religions that may be found in the classroom and their ramifications. This difficulty may be lessened by conducting in-service teacher education programmes for teachers of R.E, that will develop in them both knowledge and skills in the subject.

The thrust of this research was to develop in trainee teachers the correct knowledge and right attitude to A.I.Rs through the phenomenological method. This will keep them abreast with new developments in Religious Education and make them apply the skills of “disciplined inquiry” as tools and raw materials for learning (Smart cited in Schools Council Working paper 36: *ibid*).

### **2.2.1.3 WHAT IS GOOD RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?**

In their attempt to answer the question ‘What is good RE’, Erricker et al (op. cit.) argue that a good syllabus in R.E should provide opportunities for learners to learn about religion and to learn from religion.

#### **2.2.1.3.1 LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION**

In order to learn about religion, learners should study religious beliefs, doctrine, sources and religious practices as objectively as possible. The aim of studying these is to get religious knowledge. This can be achieved through the phenomenological method proposed by Smart (1973) which emphasises respect for the religion and values of others. This is one of the important aims of R.E. This means that the curriculum planners and teachers should select both content and methodology carefully in order to instill in learners correct knowledge and the right skills. In teaching learners’ religion, the teacher must be honest to present the truth about these religions even if

what they teach might be considered queer, unbelievable, bizarre, primitive or oppressive, thus letting religion speak for itself.

Such an honest presentation will provide good ground for learners to develop and exercise critical skills in R.E such as the ability to discern, investigate religious material and interrogate religious data so that they can make personal and informed judgments and decisions (Erricker et al. (op.cit:25). It is therefore not in the best interest of the teacher to present an ‘edited, whitewashed and clean impression’ of the religions under study. In order to learn about religion, the participants were exposed to religious phenomena through field work and had the opportunity to interact with them.

However, on one hand, the varied nature of aspects of religion, the wide variety of religious phenomena and lack of coherence of religious material may confuse the Primary School child who may find it difficult to discern what is of significance to religion and to different people. On the other hand, parents as stakeholders in the education of their children may determine what is to be taught in R.E. This is particularly the case in church schools in this country.

#### **2.2.1.3.2 LEARNING FROM RELIGION**

When learners make their own responses and develop insights from issues studied in religion, they are learning from religion. The teacher should encourage learners to draw insights and parallels from their own religious experiences and those of others through empathy. This will enable children to develop spiritually. Grimmit et. al. (1991) cited in Erricker et al., (op.cit.) developed a method that focused the learners on religious phenomena such as objects, symbols and sounds so that they investigate and learn from them. They called these phenomena the “numena” ( a term borrowed from Eliade: 1957) which they described as the gift for the child to engage with and learn from in order to develop their own spiritual insights and growth (Erricker, et al.,op.cit:25).

The ‘numena’ has a lot of significance to the believers therefore learners should seek to understand this significance. Though plausible, the study of religious phenomena may be hampered by many factors. “...for a variety of reasons ... lack of resources, or insufficient subject knowledge, or even a lack of conviction about the relevance of

some of the material, there may be few opportunities provided for pupils to engage with examples of religious beliefs and practices as phenomena in their own right.”( Erricker et al., op. cit: 28). When this happens, learners will not have reference points to make them understand why believers respond to their life experiences the way they do, in the light of their religion. This is particularly true of phenomena in A.I.Rs which is not commonly available especially in urban areas of Zimbabwe.

#### **2.2.1.4 SOME IMPORTANT WRITERS AND RESEARCHES IN R.E.**

##### **2.2.1.4.1 Grimmitt(1973)**

His approach emphasised the need to have concepts that bridge the gap between the children’s experiences and what children think are the central concepts of religion. He argued that good R.E should be based on concepts. He identified two types of concepts in R.E namely those that have to do with commonly shared human experiences and those that come from traditional beliefs. These two types of concepts were developed into areas for pupils to inquire according to their ages (Grimmitt, 1973:49). The same methodology was used in The Westhill Project of the 1980’s undertaken by Garth Reid, John Rudge, and Roger Howarth ( Erricker et al., op. cit).

Engebretson (2009) notes that Grimmitt maintained that Religious Education contributed to education and advocated for a methodology in R.E that differed from that of the Church since the purpose of the Church (in Britain) and that of the state were different. R.E by the Church aimed at instructing learners and was therefore confessional. The aim of R.E in state schools was educational, that is to develop certain ways of thinking and responding to human religious experience. The main problem with Church R.E for Grimmitt was that its approach ( that is confessional) “...transposed a particular group of assumptions and pedagogies from the setting where they naturally belonged, the voluntary audience of Church or Sunday schools, to the non-voluntary, immature audience of compulsory state education” (Engebretson, ibid:668). Grimmitt suggested that state schools structure their content for R.E in line with the principles of phenomenology so that the pupils can deepen self understanding and achieve a better understanding of life.

#### **2.2.1.4.2 The Warwick Religious Education Project (1980's)**

The project was carried out by Robert Jackson and Eleanor Nesbitt in the United Kingdom. Jackson and his team of researchers developed an approach that focused on ethnography in R.E. Like Grimmit's approach, this project also emphasise the need to identify concepts that will support pupil's learning. Through story books, children studied the characters, objects and action in the stories and relate the experiences of the characters with their own experiences. This was done through concepts that acted as bridges between the pupil's experiences and the experiences of the characters in the story. Thus it uses ethnography to explain concepts in R.E. This comparison of experiences fostered the skills of reflection and constructive criticism (Erricker et.al., op.cit; Jackson, 2000:135). The phenomenological investigations that the participants embarked on in the course of this research enabled them to perceive essences and concepts in A.I.Rs that fitted well with the concepts in the same religion identified by the new FAREME syllabus.

#### **2.2.1.4.3 The Stapleford Project (1986)**

This project led by Trevor Cooling aimed at developing an approach to be used in teaching Christianity. It focused on studying concepts that are key to R.E and how they can be used to teach Christianity. It was considered not desirable to develop a curriculum that is based on information to be studied by pupils, but one based on key concepts in R.E (Cooling, 2000:156). The studies above agree on the importance of the use of concepts in teaching learners religion rather than general information on religion. It was also useful to use concepts such as rituals, ceremonies, religious objects, religious regalia and religious practitioners in A.I.Rs in this research to develop knowledge and appreciation of that religion.

#### **2.2.1.4.4 David Hay: The religious experience and Education Project: Experiential**

##### **Learning in RE.**

This project was influenced by Charles Darwin's contention that religious experience was innate part of humanity. As such, the pupil's spiritual experiences can be used to

seek an understanding of religion (Erricker et al., op. cit; Hay, 2000:73). In order to do so, there is need to develop and employ a methodology in R.E that enlightens the learner's religious and spiritual experiences so that they can reflect on their own spirituality and that of others, thus "assisting students to have empathy with the personal world of believers"(Hay, ibid :73). Hay considered the child's religious experience as a tool for understanding the religious experience of others. Through the phenomenological method, teachers would attempt to understand and broaden the spiritual experiences of their learners.

While this approach enables the child to examine reasons for his or her own feelings and to reflect upon them, children may not consider religion important, may not be religious and may not have religious needs.

#### **2.2.1.4.5 The Children and World Views Project (1993)**

This project was carried out by Clive and Jane Erricker. Like the previous project, it is also interested in the importance of the children's experiences in the way children learn in RE. It criticises the emphasis placed on the need for children to acquire knowledge about religious beliefs and practices through relevant content. Children learn through their experiences and the way children make sense of these experiences. Their research shows that children learn more effectively when the teacher encourages them to reflect on their experiences and interpret them, "... in an environment that is respectful, safe, and free from criticism and ridicule." (Erricker et al., op. cit: 32).

Thus effective R.E should be child- centered and should deal with what is within the children's experiences and begin with concepts that are of interest to them. Thus the two researches uphold the importance of the learners experiences in RE. This is sometimes called the experiential approach and is another version of the Child-Book-Child approach which also emphasises the need to begin R.E lessons with the child's experience. The teacher should be willing to learn from the children's religious experiences and at the same time help learners understand them better. In R.E, the teacher is therefore not a 'teacher' in the strict sense of the word, but a facilitator of learning.

### **2.2.1.5 CONCEPTUAL ENQUIRY AS AN APPROACH TO RE.**

Erricker et al., (op. cit.) developed this approach which basically involves the identification of concepts that are important to believers. The premise of their argument is that religion and religious beliefs are always changing thereby bringing a variety of religious and secular views. They further argue that constructivism as a philosophy maintains that knowledge is a human construct that arises from how individuals and communities interpret and order their experiences according to concepts that fit the situation. Therefore in their view, knowledge is not an ontological reality or something objective but will vary with individuals and communities. As such, R.E today should address these changing patterns. For it to do this, R.E should be based on concepts and should enable the development of cognitive skills and the processes that bring them about. This approach develops the child's emotions and feelings and leads to emotional literacy.

A good teaching approach in R.E, according to Erricker et al., (op. cit: 41-42) should include the following important criteria; enquiry, conceptuality and integrity. As they write, enquiry is whereby learners grapple to answer open-ended and evaluative questions. Thus lessons focus not on rote learning or memorisation, but on carrying out an inquiry in order to carry out an investigation. In their view, conceptuality means that the inquirer should focus the enquiry on a key concept throughout the enquiry process. This should result in one or more interpretations of the concept. Integrity means making sure that the methods of teaching one adopts are closely related to each other. The levels of attainment that the methodology seeks to bring about must clearly show the learning outcomes which must be known to the learners (Erricker et al., op. cit.).

The new FAREME syllabus meets the criteria above. It is an inquiry on selected concepts. The methodology suggested, for example project- based learning, group work, demonstrations, discovery and problem solving expose learners to open ended questions and calls for evaluation. It enables learners to develop skills in problem solving, critical thinking, decision making and self assessment(Family, Religious and Moral Education grade 3-7 syllabus: 1 and 2, op. cit.). These are higher order skills that cannot be achieved through rote learning and memorisation.

The syllabus is based on concepts for example the concept of family, the concept of religion, and the concept of morals and values. The concepts are divided into sub-concepts for example, the concept religion is subdivided into Indigenous Religion, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam for each grade level (Family, Religious and Moral Education grade 3-7 syllabus, op.cit:8,9, and 10). This focuses the inquiry on a particular concept at a particular grade level. The same syllabus gives objectives for each sub concept, thus suggesting outcomes desired from the methodology.

#### **2.2.1.5.1 METHODOLOGY FOR CONCEPTUAL ENQUIRY**

Erricker et al., (op. cit.) propose a five step procedure for the conceptual enquiry approach comprising of communication, application, enquiry, contextualisation, and evaluation. They explain the steps as follows; conceptual enquiry should begin with communication. Here, learners articulate their responses to the concept. They interpret the concept in the light of their experiences and perspectives. Learners may share experiences and through sharing, they may realise that others have similar or different experiences.

At the application stage, learners apply the concept to themselves in different ways and also see how it applies to others. In doing so, learners develop perceptions, interpretations and may reflect on their own perceptions. Through enquiry, learners investigate the meaning of the concept in a more sophisticated way through breaking the concept into smaller sub-concepts. These sub-concepts are given broader interpretations.

They go on to note that when learners conceptualise the concept, they put it in the religious material related to it. Lastly, evaluation involves estimating the religious importance of the concept for the religious community under study. This should be done through the insider's spectacles. This principle is the same as the phenomenological idea of seeing religion through the spectacles of the believer. The method also places interpretation at the end of phenomenological studies, the same place interpretation is placed in the phenomenological method.

#### **2.2.1.5.2 IMPLICATIONS TO TEACHER EDUCATION**



Conceptual enquiry requires that teacher education institutions put in place the right curriculum for R.E, one that develops professional teachers for the subject. For the teachers to be enthusiastic and confident, they should have adequate subject mastery, that is the content. In addition to content, the teacher should have the prerequisite skills necessary for teaching R.E such as empathy, being without bias, and suspension of one's pre-conceived ideas in the study of religion, that is neutrality. "... you ( that is the teacher) must leave your own beliefs outside the classroom. Pupils have the right to honest, accurate information, well informed teaching through a rigorous , balanced approach..." (Erricker et al., op. cit:165). Such suspension of preconceived ideas in order to understand the religion of others is not a threat to the teacher's personal faith.

Although this is not easy, the need to do it is necessary and compelling. "The difficulties of recognising our own prejudices or preferences cannot be underestimated, but equality of opportunity is a pupil's right and our personal prejudices cannot be allowed to negate that right" (Erricker et al., op. cit:167).The curriculum for teacher education must furnish student teachers with principles that underpin R.E teaching and learning today, including assessment. This may even mean reorienting and 'reschooling' practicing teachers through in-service training.

#### **2.2.1.6 THE INTERPRETIVE APPROACH TO R.E**

This approach was developed by Robert Jackson as a way of teaching R.E in state schools in England and Wales. Jackson did not intend to replace other existing approaches with the interpretive approach. Instead, it was intended to work together with them and contribute in some way to the theory, methodology and pedagogy in R.E (Jackson, 2009:21; 2014; 2016). Through extensive ethnographic field work between the 1980's and 1990's, Jackson questioned the phenomenological method's claim of universal essences of religion and its tools of empathy and suspension of preconceived ideas about religion under study. For instance, he realized that both religious language and symbols have particular cultural contexts and cannot be understood intuitively and in a state of " disengaged consciousness" (Jackson, 2009:22). Both the believer and the researcher are influenced by their cultural contexts and may not easily overcome their own preconceptions. As Geertz writes, "Grasping the meaning of terms and symbols

depended on observing their use in context. Interpretation required, not the suspension of presuppositions...but rather comparison and contrast of unfamiliar terms used by adherents with one's own familiar concepts" (Geertz, 1983 cited in Jackson, *ibid*:22).

Apart from contextualizing language and symbols, comparing and contrasting them with what the researcher knows, the researcher interprets the phenomena by further applying it to other contexts of religious expression through one's own understanding of those religions. Thus for Jackson, the researcher engages in dialogue and self reflection, " ... not simply about understanding their use of signs-whether words or symbols- but... questioning one's own understanding and use of terms..." (Jackson, *ibid*:23).

Jackson's critique of the phenomenological method influenced the development of his interpretive approach to address the questions of how religion should be represented and interpreted through self reflection that is reassessing one's own understanding of one's way of life and that of others and constructively criticizing the religion being studied (Jackson, *op.cit*:135). Thus R.E should be guided by hermeneutics and dialogue that is dialogue with the believer and the self.

Methodology of the interpretive approach borrows from social anthropology and is hermeneutical and envisages "the process of interpreting the ways of life of others ... as a systematic, ethical, reflexive and self-critical process"( Jackson, *op.cit*:24, 2016). Thus Jackson's pedagogy in R.E is guided by three main concepts namely representation, interpretation and reflexivity ( Jackson, *op.cit*:25-26; 2016).

Representing religious phenomena should be done without necessarily stereotyping them. It should take cognisance of differences between religious traditions and differences among individuals within the same religious tradition. When interpreting religious phenomena, Jackson argues that the learners do not have to suspend their preconceptions, but need to compare and contrast their own concepts to those of the believers they are studying. As with the phenomenological method, empathy is still expected , but not before the language and religious symbols have been understood.

Reflexivity means relating one's experience to the experience of believers being studied. In Jackson's view, it involves three elements namely edification (that is reassessing their understanding of their own traditions), constructive criticism (that is sensitively critiquing the material under investigation) and lastly reconsidering the ways they have been studying the religion of others (Jackson, op.cit:25-26; 2016).

#### **2.2.1.7 INCLUSIVE R.E**

According to Jackson and Everington (2017), there is need to develop and implement an approach in R.E that is impartial and can cater for learners who understand themselves as religious and those who do not identify with any religion. This is important because R.E plays an important role in the learners' personal, social and spiritual development. Jackson and Everington developed the hermeneutical (interpretive) approach, which, in their view, enables the teacher to actively interact with the learners' knowledge and experience through active learning and dialogue. For this approach to work, the teacher should know and understand the religious and non-religious composition of the class and engage in dialogue with the learners which in turn will create a condition of trust between and among the learners and the teacher.

Through extensive qualitative research with trainee teachers and teachers in their early years of their teaching career, Jackson and Everington realized that it was rather difficult for teachers with a strong religious background to be neutral and impartial. Through research, they were however optimistic that deliberate teacher education programs can develop in trainee teachers the requisite skills, attitudes and dispositions for a fruitful career in impartial and inclusive R.E (Jackson & Everington, *ibid*:7). They argue that apart from making classrooms “a safe space for dialogue”, the approach recognizes democracy in matters of religion and education, addresses issues of teacher professionalism and academic integrity and is sensitive to learner needs and preferences.

Distinguishing between impartiality and neutrality, Jackson and Everington (*ibid*: 10-11) note that impartial teachers on one hand can accommodate differing opinion and “contain their personal commitments”. They do not discriminate on the basis of religion.

On the other hand, neutral teachers hide their personal commitment and stance. This research aimed at establishing the extent to which the phenomenological method to the teaching and study of religion can instill in trainee teachers skills of impartiality, neutrality and inclusivity in R.E.

## **2.3CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.3.1THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD**

Phenomenology of religion is of great importance to this research since it is the intended intervention strategy. The word phenomenology is derived from the English word ‘phenomenon’ and refers to things that can be observed, that is things that exist. The word can generally mean “ a fact or situation, to exist or happen..” ([www.sahayaselvam.org/2013/12/29/lecture-1-phenomenology-of-religion-an-introduction/](http://www.sahayaselvam.org/2013/12/29/lecture-1-phenomenology-of-religion-an-introduction/)). These are things that we experience, that is things that we can touch, feel, smell, taste, and see.

Phenomenology is the study of ‘phenomena’. The English word ‘phenomena’ is derived from the Greek word translated ‘phanos’ which means ‘that which manifests itself’ (Cox, op. cit:17). Phenomena are things that appear to us. Phenomenology is therefore the study of appearances, or things as they appear to us. Some small variations refer to it as the study of “... things as they appear in our experience, or the way we experience things, thus the meaning things have in our experience” ([www.sahayaselvam.org/2013/12/29/lecture-1-phenomenology-of-religion-an-introduction/](http://www.sahayaselvam.org/2013/12/29/lecture-1-phenomenology-of-religion-an-introduction/)). Phenomenology can therefore be called the study of the structure of experience or the study of consciousness and “ studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view” (Smith, 2008 cited in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Cox (op. cit: 15-18) notes that phenomenology is a philosophical movement of the twentieth century developed by the German philosopher and mathematician, Sir Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). He defines it as a method of knowing or investigating the way we know reality. The term phenomenology, however, did not begin with Husserl as it was there before him. Cox, (ibid: 17-18) notes three concepts that

influenced Husserl's phenomenology, namely pure science, philosophical radicalism and intentionality. As a mathematician, pure science taught Husserl to use clearly formulated scientific methods in studying phenomena. However, this emphasis may make us ignore issues of value and meaning of phenomena that are not measurable but brought about through natural science. The two (that is pure and natural science) are legitimate and should work together in the search for the meaning of phenomena.

Philosophical radicalism made him realise the need 'to go to the roots' in any investigation. He argues that all knowledge comes from objects of things that we perceive, that is how we perceive the phenomena. So knowledge lies in the consciousness of the perceiver that is 'the knowing subject'. Intentionality is 'the act of perceiving and understanding the phenomena' (Cox, *ibid*:18). Our knowledge of phenomena occurs when we direct our focus toward the object which is not passive but speaks to us in turn. Therefore, Cox rightly argues that knowledge comes from the interaction between the object of our perception and the subject (that is the person perceiving) leading to an objective description of the phenomena. Intentionality, according to Cox (*ibid*), means the need to describe phenomena and obtain an objective understanding of the phenomena that manifests itself to us.

Although there are various categories of objects in religion, there is a fundamental quality in them which remains invariable and unchanging. Husserl called these constant elements 'essences'. For the observer to understand the essences in the objects of the world, "...the observer must suspend his previous judgments about the world, including his own feelings, ideas, and presuppositions, and attempt to see into the very essence of the phenomena themselves" (Cox, *ibid*:18). He further argues that for this to happen, the observer must perform two tasks namely epoche and eidetic intuition.

Epoche comes from the Greek word which means 'to stop', or 'to hold back' all the observer's thoughts about the phenomena under observation. Not only does it mean the suspension of preconceived ideas, but it also means questioning one's own previously maintained thoughts and challenging convictions and biases, including one's theory of knowledge. It is starting afresh. Thus the observer goes to the field 'empty headed' in order to give ample room to the phenomena to fill his consciousness.

In this way, the observer “...perceives the world as it comes fresh from the phenomena and is able thereby to intuit new realities or ...achieve a more complete understanding of reality than has been previously attained”(Cox, *ibid*:19). This means suspending all preconceived ideas so that one allows the phenomena to speak for itself which leads to the eidetic intuition.

The word eidetic comes from the Greek word translated *eidos*, which means ‘form, idea,’ or ‘essence.’ Eidetic intuition means seeing only the important elements of the phenomena. It can also be called eidetic vision, which refers to the ability to see into the very nature or meaning of what exists in the world (Cox, *op. cit*:19; Sharpe, 1986:224; Bettis,1969:10). In order to have an objective impression of the phenomena, there is need for both *epoche* and eidetic intuition. Cox(*ibid*) calls the two the tools by which phenomenologist sees into the structures of existence in an objective manner.

He argues that as the observer performs *epoche* and eidetic intuition, he engages in three processes namely naming objects, noting relations, and describing processes. Naming happens when the observer perceives a variety of phenomena and gives them names in order to distinguish one from the other. This enables the observer to make sense of what is being observed so that the observer can speak knowledgeably about that which has manifested itself to the observer.

Cox ( *ibid*: 20) notes that after naming the various objects, the observer proceeds to note and understand their relations, thus forming ‘structures of reality’ based on the phenomena observed. The third step involves describing the processes. This means saying what is happening to and within the phenomena. It also means seeing how each event leads to other events and how they influence events to come. Thus through the three steps described above, phenomenologists “...claim to build the structure of reality not from presuppositions about the world but from the observed phenomena themselves.” (Cox, *op. cit*:20).

Thus while phenomenology starts from a subjective and descriptive angle, it aims at achieving an objective understanding and interpretation of phenomena. As a way of making the participants have a correct understanding and appreciation of concepts in

A.I.Rs, participants in this research observed the *bira* religious ceremony, named objects, noted relations and described processes involved. These steps were attempted while participants were in a state of bracketed consciousness in order to avoid bias and achieve eidetic intuition. Performing *epoche* does not make the observer less active, but allows the phenomena itself to provide the raw materials for the observation.

This is important to phenomenology since the results of the observation are closely related to the phenomena which is the source of information, not to the observer. In fact it gives the observer more liberty to interact with the phenomena uninfluenced by his own preconceived ideas and bias. Results of the observations are not considered final but change and can be revised because “human beings change and constitute a special type of phenomena...Any eidetic intuition... must be tested and revised in the light of the phenomena”(Cox, op. cit:21).These ideas from philosophical phenomenology(discussed above) greatly influenced the development of phenomenology of religion and should be understood as its bedrock.

Despite its benefits in the study of religion, *epoche* has its limitations. In studying religion, it is the observer who chooses the material to study, and the material to leave out. This in itself makes the results dependent on the observer’s selection and influences the understanding of religion or activity under study. Mindful of this problem, Petterson and Akerberg (1981:14) ask a fundamental question “What unitary principles or concepts direct the selection of data and what factors determine the interpretation of the data?” The observer’s selection and preferences may influence his observations.

The second limitation is that it is impossible to suspend all preconceived and value-judgments because cultural, social and psychological factors from birth and hidden in the observer’s consciousness will inevitably be carried into the study and regrettably affect it. “The scholar is to a great extent committed to the ideas of his age” (Pettersen and Arkerberg, ibid:61). In this research, the researcher studied the extent to which the Christian upbringing and background consciously or unconsciously influenced the participants in their study of the chosen concepts in A.I.Rs. Thus, *epoche* may not be practiced in total. It is a desired attitude very difficult to achieve and may be utopia.

### 2.3.2 PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION

Phenomenology of religion borrows heavily from philosophical phenomenology. It can be defined as the application of the phenomenological method to the study of religion. Cox (op. cit:26) defines it as, "...a method of adapting the procedures of *epoche* and eidetic intuition to the study of varied symbolic expressions of that which people appropriately respond to as being of unrestricted value for them". Some early phenomenologists of religion include the German scholar Van Der Leeuw(1938), Brede, W. Kristensen (1969), Ninian Smart (1973), Bleeker (1963), Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1972), Petterson and Akerberg (1981) and Erick Sharp(1986).

Cox (op. cit:26-40) applies the phenomenological method to the study of religion. He identifies and discusses nine (9) steps that he argues result in an orderly study of religion in its various manifestations. A summary of these steps based on the book will be attempted below. Step one; performing *epoche* has already been discussed above.

The second step is performing empathetic interpolation. To interpolate is "to insert what is outside one's experience into one's experience by translating that which is foreign into what is familiar" (Cox, op. cit:29). Leeuw coined and preferred the term "sympathetic interpolation"( Cox, op.cit:29)to refer to the same process of the phenomenological method. Smart (1973:54) prefers the term "empathetic interpolation" to describe the way in which the observer is able to recognise 'a framework of intentions' among the believers." In a state of bracketed consciousness (step one), the scholar studies the religious community in question from inside by entering into their experiences.

Once inside, the scholar must view the world as much as possible the way the believers view it. This is also called the *emic* approach and is necessary to minimise distortion. Husserl called this " getting inside the phenomena of experience." One of the proponents of this approach, Smith (1978:51-79) argues that this approach is necessary because religion and faith are not tangible and verifiable, are personal and subjective therefore can be best understood from inside in order to portray accurately what is in the phenomena.



One of the prerequisite for empathetic interpolation is empathy which is “ the cultivation of a feeling for the religious life of the community he (that is the observer) is seeking to understand”( Cox, op. cit:29). This requires the phenomenologist to share with the believers their attitudes, feelings, thoughts, fears and even joy so as to be able to see into and through their minds. This does not mean that the observer should become a believer. Through empathetic interpolation, the observer must seek to understand what the believers intend by their religious practices, myths and symbols. This is called intentionality and is a by-product of empathetic interpolation.

However, getting inside has its challenges. The observer may be prohibited by his religious convictions. Even if they are able to enter, they may not comprehend what goes on due to the limitations in religious language, culture, and unexplained religious symbols. Moreover, in Cox’s view, empathetic interpolation may not lead to understanding unless the observer interpolates what is unknown into what is meaningful to him. The observer will do this in terms of his own religious experience and culture, thus making it liable to misrepresentation. This makes it difficult for the observer to experience what the believer exactly experiences. As Cox notes, empathetic interpolation is not a scientific or historical method whose results are measurable, but an attitude which makes the outcomes subjective. However, Leeuw (cited in Pettersen & Akerberg, op. cit: 61) gets around this problem by arguing that even in science, interpolation is required so that hermeneutics, that is the art of interpretation is unavoidable.

The third step requires the observer to maintain *epoche* throughout the investigation. Bleeker (cited in Cox, op. cit: 31) justifies the need to maintain *epoche* when he says, “ phenomenology cannot concern itself with the truth of religion but nevertheless treat each religion with respect, empathy and seriousness...recognise such beliefs as a serious testimony of religious people that they possess a knowledge of God”. Thus there is no need to ask whether what they are studying is true or false. The phenomenologist should be interested in the accurate description and understanding of what the believers believe to be true.

However, Wiebe (1981:1-6, cited in Cox, op. cit.) notes that the concept of truth in religion may contradict the need for empathetic interpolation( in the previous step). This is because in order to maintain *epoche*, one has to agree with the convictions of the believer and one is expected at the same time to suspend judgments about the claims of the believer. Smart (1973:33-34 cited in Cox, op. cit.) finds a solution to this problem in a procedure he calls ‘expressive bracketing’. This is whereby the observer brackets out the feelings, tones, attitudes and convictions of the believer so that he can portray the situation without committing himself personally to the content of that situation, to the practices it encourages or to the feelings it induces. “ This method enables the believer to imagine what it would be like to be a believer or to act ‘as if he were one’, thus maintaining *epoche* ( Smart, op. cit:34cited in Cox, op. cit.).

The next step requires the observer to describe the phenomena he encounters while ‘inside’. This should be done as accurately as possible. All aspects should be described before any interpretation can be attempted. “ Words, actions, gestures, songs, symbols, explanations by adherents...must be recorded in detail ... The descriptions obtained must correspond as faithfully as possible to the believers’ own testimony” (Cox, op. cit:32). However, as with the previous steps, problems of accuracy may occur.

The observer is the one doing the interviewing, transmitting religious data, recording and is the one who selects important and relevant information. This may be done on the basis of judgments that are influenced by the observer’ pre-conceived ideas. Thus pure objectivity again may be impossible. Smart (cited in Cox, op. cit:33) correctly notes, “the observer must not only describe occurrences but must also convey feelings, moods, tones within phenomena which makes it even more difficult for him to attain objectivity”. Some dilution of the intensity of these very personal experiences may occur.

After describing the phenomena, the observer builds the structure of existence based on his perceptions and gives names or categories to the phenomena. He may put them into categories of similar types of phenomena. Cox (op. cit:33-34) suggests examples of categories that can be used to name the phenomena namely myths, rituals, sacred practitioners, scripture, art, morality, beliefs and warns that each category should not

distort the phenomena but should be faithful to it so that it relates to what the believer knows. Derogatory and connotative terms like animism, superstition, primitive, magic et cetera should be avoided since they are value-judgmental. Placing the phenomena into categories helps the observer understand it and makes him see general patterns and similarities in other religions. This enables the observer to make “typological descriptions” which are “an inventory of types of religious items” (Smart, op. cit:47).

When the observer compares categories in one religious tradition with those in another, Kristensen (cited in Cox, op. cit:34) calls this “informative comparison”. However, as Cox sees it, naming can be a problem in that assigning a name or category presupposes that the observer knows and takes it from the categories or names he knows before, thus applying the knowledge obtained from another tradition. Thus preconceived ideas may find their way through the naming process.

After assigning names to the phenomena one has observed (step 5), the observer will attempt to note the relationship of one phenomenon to the other, and processes among them in step 6. As Cox (op. cit:35-36) writes, myths are related to rituals, religious teachings are the basis of morality. He also notes some processes that relate to historical development and change of religious thinking over time. This may show the observer that religion, like other aspects of life changes in response to external influences and developments in science. At this stage, the phenomenologist cannot avoid the history of the religion and religious phenomena under study. King (1983:88) cited in Cox (op.cit:35) calls this ‘historical phenomenology’ while Smith (op.cit:156-157) calls it ‘the cumulative tradition’.

The seventh step in Cox’s phenomenological method involves the construction of the paradigmatic model (Cox, op. cit:36-37). This is whereby the scholar creates a paradigm, that is a pattern applicable to the study of any religion. The paradigm is therefore a structure where all religions of the world can fit into its categories. Through it, the scholar can see similarities and differences in various religious traditions. Specific variations in content and changes in the development of religion over time or lack of it can also be noted. Thus through the paradigmatic model, phenomenology of religion relates itself to comparative religion. Cox further notes that the paradigmatic

model allows the observer to use what he has learnt in one religious tradition to another, thus making it possible to generalise findings.

Cox's eighth step requires the scholar to perform the eidetic intuition in order to understand the meaning of religion. As Cox (op.cit.) writes, the observer experiences the eidetic intuition and is able to see the essence or the meaning of religion. The meaning of religion obtained at this level is different from the meaning obtained from definitions of religion. At this level, the meaning of religion is derived from what the observer has learnt from his interactions with the phenomena of religion in question. It comes from the eidetic intuition and brings a substantive definition of religion rather than a functional one, which is obtained at the end of the phenomenological research (Cox, op.cit:36).

Some phenomenologists who have defined the essence of religion are Eliade (1959) and Smith (1978:170-179). Eliade (op.cit.) saw the meaning of religion in the division between the sacred and the profane. He argues that from time to time, the profane experience 'hierophanies' which are manifestations of the sacred. Religious people explain their existence around these 'hierophanies' through myths, rituals, symbols, sacred practitioners, scripture et cetera. Smith (ibid) found the central point in religion as personal faith. Believers of the same religion respond to a transcendental reality in deeply personal ways that cannot be fully comprehended or objectively described even by the believer himself.

However, their faith historically accumulates in their religious traditions and can be observed in religious phenomena such as their myths, rituals, beliefs et cetera and is expressed in similar ways. " Thus eidetic intuition seeks to discover a universal meaning for religion based on comparative studies conducted among a particular phenomena within specific traditions" ( Cox, op. cit:39). If the participants in this research are able to perform the eidetic intuition and come up with the essence of religion in A.I.Rs, this will help them not only appreciate A.I.Rs as authentic religion answering spiritual needs of the adherents, but also make them see similarities and differences with their Christian religion. The researcher was aware that the participants needed a lot of assistance to do this.

The ninth and final stage of the method involves verifying the intuition. Cox (op.cit: 40) says that in testing the intuition, the observer returns to the phenomena, tests the intuition through the phenomena and revises his findings where necessary. This may involve revisiting all the steps of the method. In this step as with the previous steps, the phenomena is of paramount importance. The eidetic intuition remains accountable to the phenomena. It is the phenomena which defines the meaning of religion. However, testing the intuition can be difficult. This is because religious data is subjective, elusive and changes. As such phenomenological descriptions are difficult to verify or falsify ( Dhavamony, 1973:16 cited in Cox, op. cit:40).

The outline and discussion of the phenomenological method above has helped to shed light on the steps, tools and aims of the method. It has emerged that throughout the phenomenological research, religious phenomena and their correct observations are critical to the success of any phenomenological research. If found applicable, the method, despite its challenges will go a long way in helping the participants have a correct understanding of A.I.Rs and appreciate its concepts. It may widen their concept of religion and help them realise similarities and difference between A.I.Rs and Christianity.

## **2.4 THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE.**

### **2.4.1 PRE-COLONIAL TO COLONIAL PERIOD**

In pre- colonial Zimbabwe, like in many African countries, R.E has always been part and parcel of indigenous education from antiquity. Through religion, African societies were able to maintain their traditions and social institutions such as the family, communal life marriage, justice, good governance and communal life. Religion pervaded all aspects of life and gave meaning and purpose to it. Due to its importance, religion was taught to the younger generation in various ways by the elders who were custodians of African culture and religion. Every nation engages and invests in educating its children against vice that lead to its detriment while promoting virtues that society cherishes as beneficial and lead to its sustenance.

Western missionaries and colonial settlers misconstrued African people (Zimbabweans included) as a people with no religion, no idea of God and no moral values hence felt the urgent need to leave their kith and kin to go and spread the Christian faith to Africa. On setting foot in Africa, they found (though gradually) strong religious institutions which bound the families and communities together and were used as a weapon to repel and confront Western imperialism. Sooner or later, they realized the need to devise ways to fight their number one enemy that is A.I.Rs if they were to make inroads in spreading their Christian faith. This confrontational approach has been sustained to the present day and has many relics in the form of Christian apologists and pietists keen to maintain and spread the Christian faith at any cost.

The people of pre-colonial Zimbabwe were highly religious and spiritual, with well organised and defined religious institutions and methods of religious and moral education (Busia, 1964:16 cited in Ter Harr, op.cit:18). Traditional values and thought patterns were passed from one generation to the other orally by the elders who were considered granaries and reservoirs of knowledge (Ocitti, 1973:80 cited in Ter Harr, op. cit :19). The elders acquired the knowledge through several years of interaction with customs and traditions of their people.

Thus old age was highly esteemed and the existence of such members in society was considered a blessing. “The older generation would pass on to the young the knowledge, skills, modes of behaviour and beliefs deemed necessary... and aimed at the continued existence of society” (Ter Harr, op. cit:16). Indigenous Religious Education was informally taught as the younger members of society participated in the religious life of the family and community. The younger people took part in religious, social, political and economic life of the community together with their elders who acted as mentors while the young participated as ‘apprentices’.

Ter Harr ( op.cit.) notes that teaching methodology varied from instruction to example and custom. Children were instructed through do’s and don’ts and learnt through the example set by their elders. There were neither classrooms nor specialist teachers. Education (including religious education) ‘was vocational training’(Ter Harr,op.cit:17). Religious life pervaded every other sphere of life and training in other areas of life was

considered of equal importance as religious training. According to Busia (1964:16 cited in Ter Harr, op. cit.) “...religion pervaded all activities and relationships, and education therefore inculcated a religious attitude to life: reverence towards nature and the unknown universe”. These cherished values were transmitted through customs and tradition, participation in rituals and ceremonies.

These religious activities cultivated a sense of dependence on God and the spirits. It was the duty of the parents as custodians of culture and religion to explain A.I.Rs and to impart them to the younger generation. The children learnt from the good example set by the elders. This way, moral education was part and parcel of R.E. (Ocitti, 1973:80 cited in Ter Harr, op.cit.). The need to impart moral values was an important part of the education of the child and was closely associated with religion. The ancestors who lived moral lives during their lifetime demanded their offsprings to be morally upright and punished those of wayward behaviour.

Ter Harr (op. cit.) notes that as the child participated in the activities of the community such as family gatherings, funerals, rites, rituals and even the installation of a chief, the child learnt lessons in A.I.Rs and morality. He further argues that moral education of the children was the responsibility of all members of the community. Through the involvement of all senior members of society, cherished values were transmitted from one generation to the other from antiquity.

At family level, a man's eldest son occupied a special position in the family. He went through several years of 'apprenticeship' in the religion and customs of the family. He was the heir of the estate of the father and upon the death of the father, he was appointed (through the inheritance ceremony) the father of the family. This title meant that he took over the functions, duties responsibilities and privileges of his late father(Ihejirika cited in Ter Harr, op. cit.). The duties included the religious role of intercession and intermediation between the family and their ancestors. Thus strictly speaking, the eldest son was a religious practitioner at family level.

The above discussion is not a glorification of the past but is an attempt to show that R.E through various methodologies was known to Africa before the advent of colonialism.

This system of education, however, was not a panacea to all problems of the community. Virtues as well as vices existed in pre-colonial African societies. Traditional African education had its limitations. Ter Harr, (op. cit.) argues that indigenous African education failed to prepare community members for challenges of modern life. As a result, many indigenous Africans find it difficult to apply indigenous African values to modern times. This has resulted in the conspicuous moral decadence in Africa and the abandonment of A.I.Rs by many. One of the participants' reasons for having negative attitudes to A.I.Rs was that the religions were old fashioned and did not keep with the times.

## **2.4.2 COLONIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The advent of colonialism in Africa brought with it Western culture and religion. The missionaries, whose main interest was religious imperialism came first to pave way for the colonialist whose interests in Africa were economic and political. The spread of western religion and civilisation made it easier for the colonialists to come and subjugate the indigenous people later. As a sign of cooperation, the missionaries got land and financial assistance from the British South Africa Company to establish mission stations in the then Rhodesia between 1890 and 1893.

According to Zvobgo (1996:148) "...the most potent agency in the evangelisation of the Africans of Zimbabwe between 1883 and 1929 was western education". The missionaries established mission schools whose main objective was not education but the propagation of the respective missionaries' religion. Atkinson alludes to this when he says of the London Missionary Society's work in Rhodesia, "...Anglican thinking on education was dominated by the need to establish a comprehensive school structure , capable of teaching Anglican beliefs" (Atkinson, cited in Dachs, 1973:87).

The school was considered the gateway into the church. Without them "there would be no missions, no African attendance, no adherents, no success" (Zvobgo, op. cit:148). Thus even with the introduction of western education, the spread of Christianity was their main goal. It was envisaged that when the Africans are able to read and write, they will



be able to read the Bible and scripture. This was good for their faith. Thus education was part of the imperialist strategy.

In order to be enrolled at the school, the African child had to go through a course in Christian catechetics. “During the colonial period catechetical training was the main type of religious education as far as the Catholic missions were concerned ...” (Ter Harr, op. cit:88). Upon completing catechetics, the child was baptised and given a new Christian name. This signified a complete break with the past and a new life in the Christian faith. This was necessary because the Shona people, like many African people were considered as a people with no religion, tradition, and institutions and as empty vessels to be filled with western knowledge (Kapenzi, 1979:92-93).

In a Pan-African Catechetical study week held in Katigondo, Kenya, Cardinal Rugambwa (1964) defined catechetics as, “ the care given to imparting the fullness of Christian doctrine in such a way as to inspire a wholehearted acceptance , which in its turn leads to a full grown love of God and a ‘putting on of Christ’” ( Rugambwa, 1964 cited in Ter Harr, op. cit:89). The missionaries attitude to A.I.Rs was confrontational and contemptuous. Zvobgo (op. cit.) notes that the curriculum of the mission schools of the period was laden with western religion and values. For instance in the classroom, ‘Bible instruction’ that is the study of the Bible especially the New and Old Testaments, history of Christianity and church dogmatics took the centre stage.

Zvobgo further notes that the teachers were chosen from the “choicest of our pupils from the various schools as catechists”. From this group of born again Christians came ‘teacher – evangelists’ whose duty was to teach Bible instruction and to preach the Christian faith (Zvobgo, ibid:149). They would do this at the mission school and in the villages. In Christian mission stations, Christianity was taught in a dogmatic and confessional way in order to convert the pupils into the Christian faith. Church attendance was compulsory and the environment was Christian.

Thus, the main aim of Religious Education of the colonial period was the conversion of the pupils to the Christian faith. Even when it became apparent in the early 1970s that the curriculum in R.E should be adapted to suit the African child, it was still “ based on

the principle of superiority of the Christian faith” but “presented in accordance with the demands of modern pedagogy” (Ter Harr, op. cit:91). For instance, following the deliberations of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) catechetical congress of 1973, educational method and curriculum at catechetical schools was broadened and brought about a new attitude to R.E.

It was no longer adequate to consider R.E as the giving of instruction on the Christian religion where the ‘teacher’ had to transmit revealed truths and do’s and don’ts that had to be accepted by faith. There was need to embrace the ‘life-approach’ and educational methods “that had to do with the formation of people, and it had to follow men and women , not only through their period in school, but all through life” ( Spearhead 1979:51 quoted in Ter Harr, op.cit.).

From the discussion above, colonial R.E was initiated by the missionaries with the aim of converting African children to the Christian faith. In its early years, it used the dogmatic or confessional approach and presented the Christian faith as ‘ the’ religion which answers men’s deepest spiritual needs. Thus R.E was not introduced as an academic subject in its own right, but as an ancillary to the evangelistic work of the church.

In the mid 70’s, new insights in RE education and the need for the church to adapt itself to African thought patterns and world views required a change in both the content and methodology in R.E. Still, the Christian faith took the centre stage. The situation changed in the post-colonial period when many African governments advocated a genuine change in the form, content, aims and methodology in R.E. The role of the church in R.E in the new era was also reviewed. However, the confessional approach of the Christian missionaries left a long lasting and indelible mark in many African Christians who maintain that Christianity is the only true religion; an ingredient of religious confrontation today. There were conspicuous relics of this perception among the research participants.

#### **2.4.3 POST COLONIAL TO THE PRESENT**

The post- colonial period in Zimbabwe as in many African countries saw a shift in the aims and objectives of education including R.E. It was envisaged that the subject should re-educate the African child to value his/her own religion and cultural values so that they redefine, rediscover and believe in themselves, appreciate and tolerate religious diversity (Ter Harr, op. cit.). There was need to transform the education system from the exploitative colonial education to one that would reflect the Zimbabwean new reality and national goals. In December 1985, a two-day conference was held to map the way forward for a new Primary School Religious and Moral Education syllabus. Delegates from Teachers Colleges, the Curriculum Development Unit and the University of Zimbabwe attended the conference whose aim was to develop a syllabus in R.E that fosters national identity, national aspirations and religious heritage. This called for change not only in the content of Religious Education but also a change in the methodology. Thus, the changes were not only theological, but also pedagogical.

The new syllabus and the study materials were to be guided by the child-book-child approach. The approach emphasises the child's religious experience as the starting point and the springboard for further learning. It gives the teacher the latitude to draw study materials from biblical, traditional, and other scripture and religious sources(Religious and Moral Education Infant Syllabus, op. cit:3). Thus the infant syllabus approach is essentially multi-faith and recognises other religions as genuine, authentic and valuable learning material. Various learning materials including the Teachers' Resource Books and the Pupils' Books were developed by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and published by Longman and College Press publishers.

More recently in 2015, the CDU developed a new syllabus for FAREME for Primary School grades 3-7 whose methodology is "multi-faith, non-proselytising, and non-confessional..." (FAREME syllabus, op. cit:2). Unlike the previous syllabuses, the new syllabus identifies Indigenous Religion as one of the five religions to be studied thus recognising it as a religion that addresses the religious needs of Indigenous Zimbabweans. This research sought to develop in participants, knowledge, an open mind, the right skills and attitude to A.I.Rs thereby making them effective implementers of the new syllabus through the phenomenological method to the study of religion.

Schools Council working paper 36 (op. cit.) argues that when religious educators adopt an open and educational approach to Religious Education and abandon the confessional approach, then the subject will be more readily accepted and valued in the schools. Wynne (cited in Harr, 1990) postulates that the new insights in education requires a new approach to Religious Education in Schools, one that is educational and not biased towards any particular faith such as the phenomenological method.

Wiredu(cited in Coetzee and Roux (ed) (2002), basing on Akan religion, argues that there is need to decolonise African Religions, that is correcting misconceptions arising from the colonial era. His arguments are based on concepts that were misconstrued by western scholars who were handicapped by presuppositions and lack of understanding of A.Rs. He also notes that when some African writers and scholars (for example, J.S. Mbiti and B. Idowu) reacted to misconceptions by western scholars, they became obsessed by the need to show that African people were religious and that A.Rs fitted well into categories and concepts in Western Religions.

In so doing, they also misconstrued A.Rs and superimposed Western categories to ARs. Sadly, many Africans and African scholars adopted these ways of thinking and in some cases “... have internalised them so completely that they apparently can take great pride in propagating stories of the ubiquity of the supernatural in African thought..” (Wiredu, op. cit:24). The same author admits that it is difficult for Africans to free themselves from this assimilation, in order to be totally free “ but at least we can consciously initiate the struggle of conceptual self-exorcism.” (Wiredu, op. cit:24).

This process can be enhanced through the development and implementation of Teacher Education curricular for Religious Education that emphasises on methodology and content so that it equips pre-service students with the right education to undertake the task of RE. Harr (op. cit:137) correctly remarks, “...such a change would also have important repercussions for educational administration, for teacher training and for the production of textbooks.” According to Banana, “ It would be necessary to de-educate in order to re-educate many in the teaching profession, if we are to effect fundamental change free from the colonial image.”(Seminar on Education in Zimbabwe:174 cited in Harr, op. cit:139)

#### 2.4.4 CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN RELIGION IN ZIMBABWE

This section makes an overview of the relations between Christianity and A.Rs in Zimbabwe from the colonial period to the present. It should be noted that right from the time Christianity was introduced in Zimbabwe, it opposed indigenous religion and all its facets. With the passage of time, there was felt a need to adapt some aspects of A.Rs into mainstream Christianity. While some denominations remained conservative, others allowed it to some degree. The formation of African Independent Churches can partly be explained as a reaction to the resistance to change and lack of adaptation to A.Rs by some Christian denominations.

The history of Missionary activity in Zimbabwe dates back to 1890 when the missionaries established mission stations in this country. Zvobgo (op. cit.) studied the history of missionaries in Zimbabwe from 1890 and notes that the London Missionary Society established mission stations in Matebeleland as early as 1859. He further observes that in Mashonaland, missionary work started as early as 1890. For instance, the Jesuit Missionaries formed Anglican Missions, while the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa established Morgenster Mission in 1891 (Zvobgo, op. cit.).

According to Murphree (1969), the Missionaries divided the land into geographical regions with one denomination working in a particular region. This partitioning had a long lasting effect on the proselytising of the indigenous people. Even today, certain regions are predominantly Roman Catholic, Reformed Church, Anglican, et cetera, corresponding to the original partitioning of the nineteenth century. Today, the participants' affiliation to Christian denominations roughly follows this pattern.

As alluded to in the introduction of this section, the early Missionaries used a confrontational approach in dealing with the indigenous people's religion and culture. This was due to the misconception that Western civilisation and religion were superior to African religion and civilisation. In fact, strictly speaking the Africans were considered as a people with no religion, and morality, as barbaric and uncivilised.

This state of affairs not only justified the missionary enterprise, but gave it a sense of urgency and impetus. It justified why it was necessary for the Missionaries to leave

their kith and kin and venture into Africa; a continent perceived to have all kinds of danger, and why their mother countries should support their work financially. The derogatory terms like ‘heathens, pagan, savages and natives were used to refer to Africa’s perceived spiritual and moral bankruptcy, pathetic and deplorable state.

O’Neil (quoted in Zvobgo, op.cit:103) had this to say about the older Karanga people of the Chilimanzi district of Zimbabwe, “...they appear to be the most debased, and vicious...they have no high thoughts, no wish to be lifted up out of their present degraded state... still less than they should embrace Christianity.” He goes on to describe them as a people deeply sunk in vice and superstition. In the same line of thought was Father J. Loubiere (quoted in Zvobgo, op. cit:127) who remarked that an African Christian convert living among his Karanga acquaintances will need to be a hero to maintain his faith because “the devil is so well at home in the native milieu..” This state of affairs, according to the westerners, needed urgent attention and strategic thinking.

One of the main strategies employed by western missionaries and colonialists was to denounce A.Rs and African culture as superstitious, false and barbaric. Thus A.Rs were not recognised and were the very thing Christ died for. There was need to exorcise the false religion and superstitious thinking of the ‘natives’ through preaching, conversion, and baptism which was to result in the ‘putting on of Christ’. Since the older Karanga were already sunk in vice and difficult to convince, attention was focused on the younger children who were lured to the Christian faith through the Mission School. Conversion to the new faith was a prerequisite to enrolment at the school (Zvobgo, op. cit.). At the Mission School, Western thought patterns and worldviews were propagated and emphasised. The environment was thoroughly Christian, with the pupils forced to attend and actively participate in routine church services. This researcher attended a Reformed Church mission school for secondary education where church attendance on Sunday was compulsory.

Zvobgo (op.cit.) notes that some of the strategies included the translation of the Scriptures ( between 1897 and 1923) into the vernacular. This was to enable the Christian converts to read the scriptures on their own. He also notes that between 1898 and 1921, Christian villages where converts were kept in isolation from their ‘heathen’ relatives

were established. This was necessary to protect the new converts from heathen influences of their kinsmen. From this 'new generation' of enlightened Africans, Catechetics and evangelists were trained. Their duty was to minister among their own people.

As for the importance of these evangelists, Soderstrom (quoted in Zvobgo, op. cit: 130) says, " Without the work of African Evangelists and teachers, the Christian Church would still be a tiny tree in the dry African soil." Thus while Christianity was brought to Africa by the Missionaries, it was spread to the Africans by African Christian evangelists. These evangelists were considered by the missionaries the 'enlightened ones.' This perhaps is the origin of the perception held by many Christians today, and the participants in this research that those who have become Christian have seen the light and have been delivered from sin and ungodliness unlike those that have remained in A.Rs.

The Mission school as a strategy of the missionaries has already been discussed but it may be necessary to note that Western education of this period was meant to enable the African Child to read scripture so that they can strengthen their faith. The pupils were catechumens and converts and were required to exhibit remarkable disdain of their own culture, religion and civilisation. Thus the initial aim of education at mission stations was religious. Zvobgo (op. cit.) notes that practical skills development such as wood work, metal work, brick laying, weaving, knitting and cookery were introduced later after realising that the Africans will more readily embrace the new faith if the curriculum at the mission school equips them with practical skills. The historical link between Christianity and western education had also influenced the participants into thinking that Christianity and western education were superior to A.Rs and traditional values. Their disdain for A.Rs was based on the perception that these religions were archaic.

The mission hospital was and is still one of the strategies of conversion for both the young and the old African. The original idea was to prove that western medicine was superior and scientific as compared to traditional medicine. Western medicine would also prove that the cause of illness was neither witchcraft nor sorcery and that health and well-being should not be sought in ancestor 'worship' but in Western medicine and faith in Jesus Christ of the Christian faith. In a state of well-being, the Christian gospel would be more readily accepted than in physical pain (Parsons, cited in Zvobgo, op. cit:202). This

teaching is probably responsible for the participants' dislike for traditional medicine and the traditional medical practitioner.

The Mission station comprised the school, church and hospital. The justification for this tripartite establishment was that Jesus of the Christian faith taught (hence the school), preached (hence the church) and healed (hence the hospital). Dachs (op. cit.), and Zvobgo (op. cit.) note that the indigenous peoples' response to missionary evangelism and colonialism was initially marked by outright resistance that culminated in the Shona and Ndebele uprising of 1896 to 1897. As time went by, many indigenous people, lured by western education and religion were converted to Christianity and took pride in their new form of existence. Zvobgo (op. cit.:214) makes the same observation when he says that the missionaries took advantage of the African children's "hunger and thirst for Western education" to convert them to the Christian faith.

While the confrontational approach was desirable for early missionaries to spread the Christian faith in Africa, resistance that the evangelists faced soon made them realise that there was need for a change of attitude towards indigenous religion and traditional values. The development of African Christian Theology; a discipline which attempted to give a fresh look at the dimensions the Christian faith takes in Africa, gave insights on the need for better relations between A.Rs and Christianity. There were also voices crying loud from African Christians for the need for the Christian faith to incorporate African thought patterns and worldviews. This resulted in the formation of African Initiated Churches whose presence in Zimbabwe is a force to reckon with. These church movements' attitude to A.Rs is more accommodative than that of the mother church.

This was necessary if Christian faith was to remain relevant to the indigenous people. Today "traditional values and outlooks continue to live and to exercise an influence among all sections of the population, including bona fide Christians...have often found new life in neo-traditional religious movements and in the Independent African Churches." (Shorter, 1975:2). Shorter (ibid) argues that developments in African Christian Theology have shown the need to take A.Rs seriously and engage in dialogue with it. For this to happen, Shorter urges Christian leaders and theologians have to change



their attitude and overcome prejudice, accommodate A.Rs and be humble enough to allow Christian theology to undergo change.

He further argues that such a 'risk' would be necessary in order to establish fellowship with A.Rs. He identifies the need to overcome barriers of language, symbols and imagery in A.Rs if dialogue with it is to be successful. In order for the research participants to engage in genuine dialogue and have a correct understanding of the language, symbols and imagery of A.Rs, they carried out field work at the traditional *bira* ceremony and visited the traditional medical practitioner. This also helped them develop skills in observation and interpretation. Earlier in this section, it has been shown that these two skills are integral aspects of the phenomenological method.

In Government tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe, as at the College under study, the freedom of worship that prevails is conducive for the Christian students to engage in a genuine dialogue with A.Rs. Students are free to profess a religion of their choice and to form religious gatherings. Every Wednesday evening, students are allowed to attend religious gatherings of their choice. However, Christian students and staff members who are the majority, associate Christianity with modernity and A.Rs with backwardness and superstition and will most unlikely be willing to associate and dialogue with A.Rs.

Taken from this angle, Shorter (ibid:8) correctly notes, "Modern education in schools and Universities and their environment give pressure to the African student to abandon his commitment to Traditional Religion long before he can acquire the techniques necessary for a sophisticated understanding of it." Where the student is a devoted Christian, this is even more likely and adds to the ignorance and negative attitude to A.Rs as noted among the participants in this research. Such belonging and commitment to a Christian denomination exerts so much pressure on the student that "...no matter how nostalgic or sympathetic he may be, he comes to the study of his subject as much as an outsider..."(Sorter, ibid:8). Such a state of affairs among student teachers who are supposed to have correct knowledge and attitude to other religions including A.Rs required deliberate and urgent intervention.

For the dialogue to be genuine and fruitful, Shorter (ibid) recommends that the African Christian student of religion has to be conscious of the fact that A.R is not a religion of past times, neither is it dying and no longer relevant in modern times. It should be considered a living tradition that links the past to the present and still influential even among professing Christians who “...return to them when occasion arises with remarkable ease.” (Shorter, iibd:10). Many African Christians resort to A.Rs and medicine secretly when occasion demands. Thus a historical study of A.Rs which uses historical evidence is necessary to show continuity of the past with the present and predict the future of A.Rs.

Another manifestation of dialogue with A.Rs is found in African Initiated Churches (A.I.Cs). African Christians who were frustrated by the denial of the mainstream churches to acknowledge and incorporate African world views and religion into mainstream Christianity formed their own A.I.Cs. These come in different types and show different attitudes towards A.Rs. Despite their differences, it can be argued that they are one way by which A.Rs survived extinction after many years of unjustified criticism and marginalisation at the hands of Western and some Christian enthusiasts.

Shorter (op.cit:13) divides AICs into three types namely the Christian type, the Hebraist, and the Neo-Traditional type. He differentiates these types as follows; the Christian type shows no major difference with the mainstream and mother church and shows no accommodation of A.Rs. The Hebraist type is Judeo-Christian and shows interest in the Old Testament part of the Christian Bible. The Neo-Traditional type shows interest in aspects of A.Rs. These are revived and given a new interpretation (Shorter, op cit). This is the case with the Apostolic Sabbath Church( A.S.C) of Johane Masowe and the African Apostolic Church (A.A.C) of Johane Marange.

Daneel (op. cit.) notes that the Spirit type A.I.Cs show remarkable adaptation to ARs. For instance, there is remarkable similarity between the work of the prophetic healer and that of the traditional healer. Some aspects of A.Rs have also been incorporated into the mainstream churches especially the Roman Catholic Church. The participants’ attitude to A.Rs. varied according to their Christian denomination and its teachings on A.Rs.

Through the ‘tools’ of phenomenology of religion, the research participants should be set free from the limitations of religious dogmatism which is prevalent in different Christian denominations in Zimbabwe. Thus once the participants free themselves from closed systems of thought, they can change their attitude, increase knowledge, engage in genuine dialogue with A.Rs and become proficient religious educationists able to appreciate religious diversity.

## **2.4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the theoretical, conceptual framework and literature review and sheds light on the theory of Religious Education. It distinguishes between theories concerning the nature of religion in education and theories concerning the function of religion in education. Insights from writers and researches in Religious Education impressed upon the researcher the need to identify and develop concepts and use the learners’ experiences as the starting point and spring board for learning in R.E. Conceptual inquiry and its methodology, phenomenological approach and the nine steps of the phenomenology of religion were discussed in the light of the challenges of religious dogmatism of the participants in this research. Through the historical study of Religious Education in Zimbabwe, changing aims and objectives in the subject challenged Teacher Education institutions to develop, through curricula in RE, pre-service teachers with the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions necessary to teach the subject in multi-faith classes today.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses research design and methodology that was used for this research. It presents data collection methods namely interview, practical teaching, observation and focus group discussion. It also discusses the population, target population, sampling and proposals for data presentation and analysis.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The term research design has been defined by various authors in various ways. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:63) define a research design as the planning of a research programme from the beginning to the end and is a guide in gathering, examining and analysing observed facts. According to Mouton (1996:107) a research design is a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. Research design can be classified into two main categories namely qualitative and quantitative research designs. The two broad categories are sub-divided into many other sub-types. This research study followed the qualitative paradigm.

### **3.2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

Qualitative research is of many types. The types include case study, ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology deserves particular focus here because it is the researcher's intended intervention strategy. "In its broadest meaning, phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value and one which sees behaviours as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality" (English and English quoted in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:18). Since I have discussed in detail the phenomenological method in Chapter two, it may not be necessary to go into detail about the method again in this chapter.

It used qualitative data collection strategies that focused on particular qualities of events and circumstances that cannot be reduced to numbers and involved an in-depth analysis of what was being studied. This brought to the open hidden meanings, trends and dormant themes in addition to the more obvious or apparent observations. Qualitative research deals with human behaviours, activities, stories, general human lives and human experience in a particular context so that the researcher is able to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Since human behaviour is contextual and changes over time, researchers are not supposed to generalise behaviours of people under study. The qualitative approach is usually used when the researcher does not know much about a certain topic and the phenomenon but is eager to know and understand more about the topic under study. The participants in this research had little knowledge about A.I.Rs. The researcher did not know about the effects of the use of the phenomenological

method on student teachers with a strong Christian background. Despite their Christian background, the students were keen to know more about this religion hence embarked on field work and group discussions on concepts in these religions.

People construct their own perceptions of reality. Their social constructions affect the way they perceive the world around them and their judgment of it too. So it was best that the researcher as the key instrument in qualitative research visited the particular setting under study and observed the phenomena as it occurs since it is the best way to understand it. Johnson and Christensen (2012) argue that qualitative researchers have to take a closer look at human choice and actions as they occur on their own without interfering with the natural flow of human behaviours. This is sometimes called the natural setting.

In order to observe, understand and interpret the reactions of the participants to religious phenomena, the researcher took them to the *bira* ceremony and visited the *n'anga* in a typical traditional setting. The researcher also allowed the participants to ask questions to religious practitioners. These questions helped shed more light on their understanding of the phenomenological method, attitude to A.I.Rs and knowledge levels about concepts in the same religions.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:29-31) discuss five major features of qualitative research design that however do not need to be all present in one research. Even if they do, they may be of differing degrees. The first is that in qualitative research the natural setting is the source of information. This means that qualitative research depends on primary data obtained on the research site through field work. Going to the site enables the researcher to get into the context, an important consideration in qualitative research. “....action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs” (Bogdan et al.,ibid:30). The researcher and the participants collected, recorded, interpreted and reviewed the data encountered in order to fully understand the phenomenon under study.

The second attribute is that qualitative research design is descriptive. Due to its concern for detail, data is gathered in form of statements, images, interview transcripts, field notes, anecdotes etcetera, rather than in numerical form. Citations from the data need to

be written down so that they can support data presentation. Data is collected in a descriptive and “nitpicking way”, without taking anything as trivial or taking anything for granted (Bogdan et al., *ibid*:30). This is sometimes called thick descriptions and is a necessary procedure in qualitative studies. Everything is scrutinised and is considered as important source of information. A close analysis of the data in their richness and form in which they were documented is done in a narrative form. In qualitative research, the written word is key in recording and presentation of research findings.

In this research, the researcher and the participants make detailed field notes on proceedings, actions, words, gesture by the guests to the *bira*, practitioners and participants during field work and presented the findings in chapter four in narrative form. The data was closely studied so that the researcher obtained a deeper understanding of the participants’ behaviours, actions, and attitudes which enabled the researcher to draw informed conclusions on the applicability of the phenomenological method in the study of A.I.Rs among participants with a strong Christian background.

The third feature of qualitative research is its greater concern for procedure rather than results or the product. The researcher was interested in understanding how participants’ perceptions and attitudes are formed and expressed and how they are translated into action and behaviour. The participants were taken through Cox’s (*op. cit.*) nine steps of the phenomenological method discussed in chapter two in order to examine and understand how the participants arrive at the meaning of religion to the Indigenous people and their change in behavior and attitude to A.I.Rs. Thus qualitative research is process oriented rather than product or result oriented.

The fourth feature relates to qualitative data analysis. Bogdan et al., (*ibid*) argue that qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively as opposed to deductive analysis common in quantitative research. While quantitative researchers begin with a hypothesis they have before carrying out a study then look for data to prove or disapprove the hypothesis, qualitative researchers do not begin with a hypothesis but try to develop theory from what they have been studying. This theory is developed from the bottom upwards and not vice versa. It is the data the researcher collects that determines the

theory. Thus the theory is ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 cited in Bogden et al., 1992).

Qualitative researchers build a picture which is not already known. This research does not seek to prove or disapprove a hypothesis already held about the applicability of the phenomenological method among pre-service student teachers with a strong Christian background, but tries to discover whether or not the method is applicable to the participants identified. The outcome was unknown and entirely depended on the evidence. Cox (op. cit.) argues that in phenomenological studies, the observer’s findings are accountable to the phenomena.

The fifth and last feature emphasises the importance of meaning in qualitative approaches. Qualitative researchers have keen interest is in the ways human beings make sense of their lives. They are interested in “ participant perspectives” (Erickson, 1986 cited in Bogdan et al., op. cit:32). The researcher did not seek to impose or import his own views, perception and perspectives in terms of the applicability of the method under investigation but, guided by the principles of phenomenology of religion, the researcher sought to understand the participants’ views and perspectives on the method and its procedures. The interviews and focus group discussions were rich sources of the participants’ perspectives on concepts in A.I.Rs, teaching religion and the phenomenological method.

### **3.2.1.1.CASE STUDY**

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, there are many types of qualitative research. This study is a case study focusing on the knowledge and attitude to A.I.Rs of Intake 18 (eighteen) and 20 (twenty) pre-service trainee teachers at Mkoba Teacher’s College in Zimbabwe and the extent to which the phenomenological method to the study of religion can improve both the students’ knowledge and perception of this religion.

A case study according to Howard, (ed.), Pumar, and Koppel (2010) is a mixed method of research and involves intensive field work at a study site, conducting observations and interviews. They go on to assert that a case study research requires some special skills on the part of the researcher. “It requires in-depth data...ability to gather data that

address fitness for purpose, and a researcher's skills in probing beneath the surface of phenomena"(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:296). Nisbet & Watt, 1984:72 cited in Cohen et al., (ibid) define case study as " a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle". Adelman et al., 1980 cited in Cohen, et al.,( ibid) define it as "...the study of an instance in action.". Thus a case study is the study of a particular case in its context. It is important to set the case in its context so that it does not lose its meaning.

Case studies are characterised by rich and detailed descriptions of people in their natural environment. The study of people in their real situations enables the researcher to understand the human situation better as compared to a study of people in abstract cases. Researchers who do not bother themselves to study people in their real context have been labeled 'armchair academics' and are handicapped by lack of context. Case studies are cognisant of the existence of many variables operating in a case and in order to accommodate the effects of these variables, case studies use several methods of collecting data and several sources of data. These are sometimes supported by quantitative methods such as survey or secondary data analysis.

Cohen, et al., (ibid) note that case studies enable the researcher to carry out a study at the 'single unit of analysis' which may be an individual, a group of people or even an organisation. They further observe that due to its close link with the context, case studies enable the researcher to establish what causes events and the impact they have, that is the researcher is able to establish how and why things happen the way they do. Case studies require that these situations be studied in depth if justice to the phenomena is to be achieved. They further admit that research contexts are unique and dynamic and therefore emphasise the need to report the actual happenings, complexities and the dynamism that reveals itself in human interactions and relationships.

Hitchcock & Hughes (1995:322-327) cited in Cohen, et al (ibid) argue that case studies are helpful to the researcher who is unable to manipulate and have control over events. They identify the following advantages of the case study approach;



- It provides a narrow focus and so allows for detailed and thick descriptions of information in the report
- Events are reported in their chronological order
- Researchers can describe and analyse events at the same time
- Allows for the study of individual cases or groups of people in their natural setting and gives them the opportunity to express themselves thereby depending on primary data and increasing reliability
- Provides geographical boundaries and allows for a direct observation of the phenomena of investigation and interaction with the participants that helps define the context.

Dyer (1995:48-9) cited in Cohen, et al (ibid) notes that case studies are both subjective and objective adding that “it is important in case studies for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted.” Thus case studies and phenomenology agree in total on the need to let phenomena speak for themselves.

In this research, the research context and the geographical boundaries were defined as Mkoba Teachers’ College intake 18 and 20 FAREME and FRMS pre-service student teachers most of whom had a Christian background and a negative attitude towards A.I.Rs. The participants were exposed to religious phenomena in A.RIs through the bira ceremony and the visit to the traditional medical practitioner so that they interact with them and in turn, the phenomena speaks to them in a direct way.

The primary data obtained from field work was supplemented by information from secondary sources such as scholars texts on spirit possession and spirit mediums and their role in religious functions. Comparative studies on spirit possession in A.I.Rs and some Christian denominations was also attempted so that participants could appreciate their similarities and differences. Spirit possession and the accompanying glossolalia (that is speaking in tongues which is taken as proof of

spirit possession) leads to miracles and is an important feature of many Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe today.

### **3.2.1.2 SAMPLING**

Mouton (op. cit.) says that a sample should be as representative as possible of the target population. Creswell (2014:160) defines a population as group of people with the same characteristics. The target population is derived from the population. A target population is a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identify and study. In this research, the population was the seven hundred and sixty-six (766) intake 18 and intake 20 General Course pre-service Mkoba Teachers College student teachers of 2017 and 2019 respectively. The target population were the six hundred and twenty five (625) third year and first year General Course student teachers of the same intakes who were studying FAREME and FRMS at the College. From this target population the researcher selected a sample of ten (10) General Course student teachers for the study using the non-probability purposive sampling strategy. The researcher deliberately selected a particular section of the wider population (those studying FAREME and F.R.M.S to include or exclude from the sample.

### **3.2.1.3.PURPOSIVE SAMPLING**

This kind of sampling is the most popularly used sampling strategy in qualitative research. As the name implies, the sample is chosen due to its peculiar nature. The researcher deliberately selects the cases because they possess certain characteristics, aspects or trends that the researcher is looking for and interested in. This way, the researcher “builds a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs” (Cohen, et al., *ibid*:156). Teddlie & Yu (2007) cited in Cohen et al., (*ibid*) say purposive sampling enables the researcher to apply representativeness and do comparison. They go on to assert that it focuses on specific and unique cases or traits, it provides detail (although it lacks breadth) and enables researchers to generate theory from data and evidence gathered from various sources.

One of the main advantages of purposive sampling is its ability to select knowledgeable participants that is participants who by virtue of their experience, profession, religiosity or expertise are able to provide the required data. Although the information obtained is not generalisable or the sample may not be representative, this is not the primary concern in such sampling. The main aim is to obtain “ in-depth information from those who are able to give it.”( Ball, 1990) cited in Cohen et al., (ibid:157). Members of the target population, that is the students studying FAREME and F.R.M.S were the most suitable to provide the required information since they were studying the subject and would be required to teach it in the Primary Schools. They were also studying the methodology for teaching the subject.

The researcher called all the members of the target population in the Religious and Moral Education lecture room and introduced his research. The research design, methodology, aims and objectives of the research were also explained. The researcher explained the risks, the benefits and other ethical considerations before asking for volunteers preferring those with a strong Christian background to take part in the research. The target population was given time to think over the issue and were asked to come and register with the researcher once they have made up their minds.

A considerable number of would-be participant expressed some reservations mainly around the perceived lack of time to take part in the research, ignorance about the topic, lack of interest in taking part in/and fear of A.I.Rs. The researcher explained to the target population that participating in a research was not like writing an examination where they will be required to provide answers. By the same token, taking part in a research around A.I.Rs did not mean believing in it. From a phenomenological point of view, it is an opportunity to learn about other religions; getting to understand what members of that religion believe and does not compromise their faith.

#### **3.2.1.4.ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher explained in greater detail the ethical considerations that were going to guide the research as follows; due to its qualitative nature, the study involves semi-

structured interviews, focus group discussions, visits/traveling to, and interaction with religious practitioners and believers in African Indigenous Religion, attendance at religious ceremonies, observation (participant and/or non participant) during field work, encounter and interaction with religious objects in African Indigenous religion. During field work, participants will be at liberty to ask questions and make remarks on matters of interest.

The researcher explained that participating in this study was voluntary and participants were under no obligation to consent to participation. There was no penalty or loss of benefit from non participation. After accepting to participate, the participants were free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

The researcher further explained anticipated risks or negative consequences of participation. Participation in this research will require participants to interact with phenomena in A.I.Rs that may be contrary to their religious convictions. It may take some of their time at College and during Teaching Practice and involves travelling to places of religious interest. However, the level of inconvenience would be limited since the researcher will slot research activities at the most convenient times. The level of risk was therefore negligible.

Observation and participation would be on voluntary basis and strictly for the purpose of this study. The practice of phenomenology of religion may open new horizons of knowledge and make participants question some of their religious convictions. It is likely that other trainee teachers and fellow Christian believers may misconstrue their participation in rituals and ceremonies in A.I.Rs as belief in these religions and lack of faith in the Christian religion. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form as a way of showing consent and indemnifying the researcher and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development from any risk that may arise from travelling by road transport.

The researcher will ensure that the information obtained from the participants will be handled with utmost confidentiality and will be used for the purpose of this research. However, if found valuable, the research findings may be used in publications, journal

articles and conference proceedings in future. The researcher will use pseudonyms in the data and research report. Thus the participants' personal names will not be recorded anywhere.

It will not be possible to connect the participants to the answers they give except during focus group discussions where participants will be encouraged to maintain confidentiality. Participants would be advised not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The researcher shall not use research information in any way detrimental to the participants, the College and the parent ministry.

The participants will not get incentives, financial or otherwise for participating in this research. However, travelling and subsistence expenses will be catered for by the researcher. Thus the participants will not incur expenses either directly or indirectly. The researcher will reimburse any incidental expenses like phone call charges incurred by the participants if need be.

Out of the target population identified above, the researcher drew a sample of ten (10) students who volunteered to participate in the research. The table below shows the distribution of participant by age and denomination.

**Table 1: Distribution of participants by age.**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
Tafadzwa	20	African Apostolic Church	AAC
Esther	33	United Apostolic Faith Church	UAFC
Lindiwe	23	ZAOGA	ZAOGA
Heather	22	Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church	JMAC
Jairos	24	Seventh Day Adventist Church	SDAC

William	42	End Time Message	ETM
Cindiso	24	Apostolic Faith Mission	AFM
Mushore	32	Jesus is Alive Ministries	JAM
Tarisai	29	Seventh Day Adventist Church	SDAC
Kudzaishe	24	Roman Catholic Church	RCC

Three (3) participants were male while seven (7) were female. The population consists of more female than male students. It was not possible to include all the Christian denominations in Zimbabwe in the sample. This would have made the sample too large. Moreover, members of other denominations just did not volunteer or agree to take part even after persuasion. Through the technique of boosted sample (Gorard, 2003:71 cited in Cohen et al, op. cit.), the researcher had to persuade the few members of some minority denominations to be part of the sample. This was the method used to include into the sample members of AAC , JAM, and ETM . On the whole, the sample managed to include mainstream and new Christian churches in order to enable the researcher understand the denominations’ teachings on A.I.Rs and their effects on the believers’ knowledge of /and attitudes to A.I.Rs. The sample also enabled the researcher to examine how negative attitudes can be improved and knowledge increased through the phenomenological method.

Some qualitative researchers acknowledge the need to deliberately select participants who “might disconfirm the theories being advanced... thereby strengthening the theory if it survives such disconfirming cases.”, a technique called negative case sampling (Cohen, et al., ibid:157). This has the effect of strengthening and enriching the data in terms of its application and interpretation. For this research, the researcher deliberately chose to focus on pre-service student teachers with a strong Christian background in order to confirm and/or disconfirm the applicability of the phenomenological method of the study of religion. If the method survives the test, the theory generated will give new directions and insights to both Teacher Education and Religious Education in Zimbabwe, the region and beyond.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGY

Data collection in qualitative research is usually but not always done through field work. It is done through several techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, observations (participant and non-participant), document analysis, field work and case study. Unlike quantitative data, qualitative data collection strategies consider the context, circumstances, behaviour, feelings, emotions, gestures and how they may change due to experiences. Thus they consider the social world of the participants and follow a naturalist paradigm (Howard et al., op. cit.). This is sometimes called thick descriptions. Thus there is no absolute truth in qualitative research. Everything is relative to the social context. Mixed approaches may use case study as a data collection technique.

#### 3.3.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews have been described by Howard et al., (op.cit), Cohen et al., (op. cit.), Putton (op.cit), and Punch (2009 & 2014) as the best way of understanding people's thoughts. It is one of the major methods of data collection in qualitative research and can easily work together with other methods of data collection such as observation and document analysis. The researcher used the unstructured interview in order to collect information on a number of issues using the questions below.

1. How old are you?
2. What Christian denomination do you belong to?
3. Were you born in a family belonging to this denomination or you were converted to this denomination later in your life?
4. If you were converted later; for what reasons did you change denominations?
5. Have you ever believed or practiced African Indigenous Religion (A.I.R.) before, either individually or as a family?
6. If you ever believed and practiced A.I.R, what were your reasons for leaving it?
7. Are there any aspects of A.I.R. that make sense to you?
8. What influences your current attitude to A.I.R?

9. As a Primary School teacher required to use the multi-faith approach in Religious Education, what is your current level of knowledge of concepts in A.I.R?
10. Why are you at this level?
11. How can your current knowledge of A.I.R be improved?

### 3.3.1.1 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Unstructured interviews are sometimes called ethnographic interviews and are usually non-standard and open-ended. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:106) define an unstructured interview as a method of getting people convey their views widely on a certain topic and involves asking respondents to comment on issues of a broad nature. They argue that this type of interview is used to understand the way people behave and to explore how they interpret meanings of what happens around them, their state of affairs and the meaning this has in their culture. Participants are free to expand their experiences.

Fontana and Fey (1994) cited in Punch (op. cit.) identify seven (7) steps that researchers should undertake when they plan to collect data using the unstructured interview. These are:

- (i) accessing the setting,
- (ii) understanding the language and the culture of the participants,
- (iii) deciding on how to present themselves,
- (iv) establishing where to find informants,
- (v) achieving trust and confidence,
- (vi) creating good relationship and
- (vii) collecting the empirical materials.

The researcher used the same questions as in structured interviews but rather in a free environment and not a rigid one as is in the structured one. The questions were altered



to suit the way participants were responding. In unstructured interviews, the researcher may also probe with own opinions or ideas so as to encourage participants to say more (Chiromo,2009). Unstructured interviews are fascinating but also require the researcher to have good facilitating skills.

In order to observe ethical considerations during personal interviews, the researcher informed the interviewees the duration of the interviews and assured them that the information they give will be treated with utmost confidentiality. In addition, the interviewees were also advised not to share information that they may feel not comfortable to talk about. These could include personal experiences considered private and confidential and experiences which, by talking about them bring back bad memories. The researcher also avoided stigmatization through stereotyping and insensitivity to gender issues. In order to observe privacy, the interviews were conducted in an office that accommodated the interviewer and the interviewee only during the course of the interviews.

Where the interviewees had problems answering some of the questions, the interviewer assisted them through probing further, restructuring the questions and giving his own views. These techniques greatly assisted in getting the desired information that would not have been obtained through the structured interviews.

### **3.3.2 PRACTICAL TEACHING**

Following the insights gained from the interview, the researcher conducted lectures with the participants on the phenomenological method of studying religion. A lecture on spirit possession and the *n'anga* in A.I.Rs was conducted after field work. During teaching and learning, the phenomenological principles of bracketing out pre-conceived ideas, empathy and showing no bias were observed.

The study of these concepts improved the students' knowledge, enabled participants to compare and contrast the concepts in A.I.Rs and Christianity and changed the participants' attitude towards A.I.Rs. When participants realised that these concepts were common to religion as a broad phenomenon, they appreciated that A.I.Rs is

one of the many religions of the world that answers the believers existential questions and spiritual needs. This also provided a theoretical basis for field work and focus group discussions.

### 3.3.3. FIELDWORK

Howard, et al., (op cit) note that this is one of the methods of generating data in qualitative research. Since this type of research relies on first- hand information, the need to get information from the source is of paramount importance. This improves qualitative research findings and meets phenomenology of religion's quest and emphasis on studying religious phenomena as accurately as possible as well as studying it in its natural setting.

Thus, the reason for going out into the field is to observe ( in participatory or non participatory ways), interview people and analyse important artifacts. In this natural setting or context, Howard et al., (op. cit.) note that the study may involve ethnographic and anthropological methods, note taking, noticing what happens, how it happens, and when it happens. However, they warn that the researcher's presence should not affect the setting so that the information obtained should be what "normally happens in this setting" ( Howard, et al., op. cit:244).

For these reasons, the researcher and participants visited places and people of religious interest such as traditional religious *bira* ceremony which involved many rituals and spirit possession, religious practitioners such as the eldest member of the family, spirit mediums, the traditional medical practitioner ( *n'anga*). At the *bira* and during the visit to the *n'anga*, African religious artifacts and regalia were observed and studied. In order to study religion from inside, ( the *emic* as opposed to the *etic* approaches) both participant and non-participant observation methods were used.

The researcher and participants had the opportunity to mix and mingle with the believers, saw for themselves what the believers did , said, their emotions, that is how they felt about what they did being guided by the principles of phenomenology gained during practical teaching. As they observed, interacted and participated ( as the case

may be), the researcher and participants made some notes for discussion and analysis later.

### **3.3.4 OBSERVATION**

As already noted above, observation is an integral part of qualitative research and case study research in particular. An observation is a direct way of learning people's actual behaviours and has been in use in the social sciences since antiquity. Marshall and Rossman (1995), Simpson and Tuson (2003:2) cited in Cohen et.al. (op. cit.) define observation as looking and noting systematically people, events, behaviours, settings, artifacts, routines, and so on.

Observations offered the researcher and participants an "opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations" (Cohen et.al., op.cit:456) which was not likely to be obtained through questionnaires and interviews were participants might respond in a manner they think would impress the researcher but different from their real behaviours. Through observations, the researcher and participants watched directly what happened during the bira ceremony rather than relying on information collected from participants indirectly. This made data from observations more reliable and valid as compared to other methods of data collection where researchers have to infer information.

Chiromo (op. cit.) gives three major types of observations namely complete participant, participant and complete observer. Punch (op. cit:153) groups observations into two namely structured and unstructured observations. He argues that in quantitative approaches, observations are highly structured whereas in qualitative approaches observations are unstructured. The researcher did not restrict participants on what to observe. They could observe any phenomena of interest and note them in their note books during fieldwork. The researcher also observed a wide range of aspect about the participants' attitudes, actions, reactions, emotions, interests and fears in an attempt to examine the impact of fieldwork on them.

In this research, both participant and non-participant observation techniques were used. The kind of observation one chooses will depend on the setting of the particular

observation (Cohen et al., op. cit.). For this research, the kind of observation used was also determined by the participants' preferences. Some did not like participant observation while others opted for it. Participant observation is an important principle of phenomenological studies as it enables the participants to be in the shoes of the believer (that is empathy) and enables them to get primary data (first-hand information).

### **3.3.5 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

A focus group is a group of people with some common experiences or background who come together to discuss a topic of common interest. During the discussion, the researcher not only recorded the members' responses but also noted the interaction of the members themselves. Howard (op. cit: 242) call this group dynamics. Focus groups, also known as group interview, are now popularly used and contribute immensely in social science research studies. Since the researcher interviewed participants concurrently rather than working with just one participant at a time, this saved time and gave participants a leeway to share their views and generate new ideas in them.

During the discussions, the researcher played several roles which include facilitating, assisting, directing, moderating, guiding and documenting group interaction. Since the environment was free, relaxed, flexible and well coordinated, the discussions were exciting and enabled the participants to air their views and insights openly. The researcher managed to see areas of agreement, disagreement, trends and controversies. Through the collective effort of the members of the group, the researcher was able to generate detailed information and the extent to which the participants' attitude towards A.I.Rs. had changed. This determined the impact of the phenomenological method on the participants' attitude and knowledge of A.I.Rs. However, there was a possibility that some respondents influenced others during discussions.

### **3.4 PROPOSALS FOR DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

After generating data through qualitative research methods, the researcher will embark on the process of data presentation and analysis. This is an important part of any research and in qualitative research, leads to the formation of grounded theory. Cohen et al., (op. cit.)

define qualitative data analysis as accounting for and explaining the data so that it makes sense and agree with the participants understanding of the situation. In the process of data analysis, the researcher notes emerging patterns, themes categories and even similarities which are the building blocks for the development of grounded theory. Qualitative data can be interpreted in many ways. This in itself can make interpretation a mammoth task while at the same time gives the advantage of detail. The various interpretations can be used for the purpose of triangulation.

Cohen et al., (op.cit.) argue that due to the many ways of interpreting data, the researcher should interpret and analyse the data in a way that the data fits the purpose for which it was collected. They note that research data can be analysed for many purposes such as the need to describe, to discover similarities, to generate themes and to understand individuals or groups (Cohen. et al, *ibid*). For this research, the researcher analysed data qualitatively in order to understand the successes and challenges in the use of the phenomenological method on the participants (as a group and as individuals) and its impact on their attitudes on A.Rs and their knowledge levels of the concepts studied.

One of the main advantages of qualitative data analysis is its ability to combine data analysis and interpretation “often by merging of data collection with data analysis” (Gibbs, 2007:3 cited in Cohen, et al., *ibid*) “in an interactive, back- and –forth process” (Teddlie &Tashakkori, 2009:251 cited in Cohen, et al., *ibid*). For this research, the researcher analysed and interpreted data simultaneously and in a descriptive way. Through the insights of phenomenology of religion and the case study research design, the researcher sought to do justice to the phenomena.

Verbatim quotations, phrases, gestures and other forms of non verbal communication will be presented, analysed and interpreted in order to retain the flavour of the original data. The researcher will begin to analyse data as soon as it becomes available, rather than to wait for the data collection process to be completed. Miles and Huberman, (1984) cited in Cohen et al., (*ibid*) correctly note that analysing data early minimises the problem of data overload and allows for “progressive focusing” and the selection of main issues or themes.

Despite its advantage of detail and thick descriptions, qualitative data analysis can lead to bias. Cohen et al.,( *ibid*) correctly observe that during analysis, the researcher selects, orders and sifts the data at his disposal in the light of its social context. This may lead to unrepresentative reporting which is not only unfair to the situation, but to the participants. Researchers tend to select and observe behaviours that suit the purpose of the research. Researchers are often influenced by some underlying theory in their consciousness which makes reporting in qualitative research subjective (Whyte, 1993:366-367 cited in Cohen et al., *ibid*). In order to minimise this problem of bias in reporting, the researcher remained steadfast in drawing analysis and interpretation from the data obtained thus letting the data speak for itself.

Giddens (1976) cited in Cohen et al., (*ibid*:540) notes that the bias in reporting arises from the double ‘hermeneutic process’ whereby the researcher interprets what the participants have already interpreted and attached meaning to it. To minimise bias, analysis should be both from inside and outside, that is meeting the emic and etic forms of analysis. If the analysis does not capture what the various participants believe, then the report may not be objective.

Ethical considerations are important in qualitative research. This is particularly so given that qualitative data analysis involves personal and confidential information which should be treated with confidentiality and privacy. This may require that participants are given pseudonyms and that nothing is done against their will. In this research, the researcher explained to the target population the nature, purpose and methodology of the research and asked for volunteers who became the sample. The names of the participants and other informants in this research are therefore not their real names. Other ethical principles of qualitative research have been discussed above and would also be followed.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed research design and methodology. Case study, which is a qualitative research design was chosen for this research and discussed in relation to phenomenology of religion. Research ethics in qualitative research design specifically in case study research were explained. Interviews, observations, practical teaching, fieldwork and focus group

discussions are the research methods that were to be used. Purposive sampling was chosen for this research and justified. Through the insights of literature reviewed on the discipline of research, this chapter also discovered affinity between and among the qualitative research design, case study and the phenomenological method. The chapter also proposed and discussed qualitative methods of data presentation and analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents, discusses and analyses data that was obtained through unstructured interviews, practical teaching, fieldwork, observation and focus group discussions. The researcher used these qualitative data generation methods in order to gain an appreciation of the applicability of the phenomenological method to the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education in tertiary Primary Teacher Education institutions in Zimbabwe. In an attempt to answer research questions outlined in chapter one, principles of data presentation, discussion and analysis in qualitative research were applied. In order to meet the requirements of confidentiality and other ethical considerations, the ten participants were given pseudo names. Therefore the names that are used in this research are not their real names.

### **4.2 DATA GENERATED FROM INTERVIEWS**

#### **4.2.1NEGATIVE ATTITUDE AND LACK OF KNOWLEDGE**

The first research question sought to establish reasons for the participants' lack of knowledge and negative attitude towards A.I.Rs. Data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion confirmed that the participants had a negative attitude towards

A.I.Rs. It emerged that the younger the participant was, the less knowledgeable they were. It was also noted that the participants who were born in Christian families and adopted Christianity as a family religion had very little knowledge and experience in A.I.Rs. The participants' attitude which was conspicuously negative was also determined by the attitude of their respective denominations to A.I.Rs. In cases where the denomination condemned A.I.Rs, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa (ZAOGA), The Unites Apostolic Church (UAFC), End Time Message (ETM) and the Jesus Alive Ministries (JAM), the participants were also negative and uncompromising but in instances where the denomination was accommodative such as the Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church (JMAC), the African Apostolic Church (AAC), the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDAC), The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) the attitude ranged from negative to indifference.

The section below presents, discusses and analyses data generated from the following interview questions;

1. How old are you?
2. What Christian denomination do you belong to?
3. Were you born in a family belonging to this denomination or you were converted to this denomination later in your life?
4. If you were converted later; for what reasons did you change denominations?
5. Have you ever believed or practiced African Indigenous Religion (A.I.R.) before , either individually or as a family?
6. If you ever believed and practiced A.I.R, what were your reasons for leaving it?
7. Are there any aspects of A.I.R. that make sense to you?
8. What influences your current attitude to A.I.R?
9. As a Primary School teacher required to use the multi-faith approach in Religious Education, what is your current level of knowledge of concepts in A.I.R?
10. Why are you at this level?



11. How can your current knowledge of A.I.R be improved?

#### **4.2.2 AGE, DENOMINATION, AND PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN A.I.Rs**

Below is a table showing the participants' age, denomination and prior experience in A.I.Rs as obtained from questions one, two, and five of the interview questions respectively.

**Table 2: Participants age, denomination, and experience in A.I.Rs.**

Participant	Age (years)	Denomination	Prior experience In A.I.Rs. Yes/No
Tafadzwa	20	AAC	No
Esther	33	UAFC	Yes
Lindiwe	23	ZAOGA	No
Heather	22	JMAC	No
Jairos	24	SDAC	No
William	42	ETM	Yes
Cindiso	24	AFM	No
Mushore	32	JAM	Yes
Tarisai	29	SDAC	No
Kudzaishe	24	RCC	No

#### **4.2.3BORN IN THE CURRENT DENOMINATION OR CONVERTED LATER**

Questions three and four of the interview questions sought to find out the participants' religious history; whether they were born in their current denominations or were converted to them later and the reasons for conversion. Two participants out of ten (20%) were born in their current denomination. Cindiso was born in a family belonging to the AFM while Kudzaishe was born to a family belonging to the RCC. Eight participants (80%) were converted to their current denominations later in their lives. The reasons for conversion from their former denominations to the current ones were varied and range from marriage, living with relatives, personal problems in life, changing places of residence to simply making a personal and independent decision.

Esther, a married woman used to go to a variety of Pentecostal churches before she got married. When she got married, she had to change to A.Rs since it was the religion of her in-laws. Later, she joined one of the Apostolic Churches which she also abandoned to join the current denomination (UAFC). The reasons for leaving the Apostolic Church was its strict dress code and dietary laws. For example they were forbidden to eat pork and were always required to keep their hair short. The dress code did not make her presentable. On Fridays, they were not allowed to sleep on beds but on the floor. Women were not allowed to sit on sofas as they were meant for men. Thus social mobility and church doctrine may lead to change of denominations in search for family cohesion, freedom and well fare.

Jairos was a member of one of the Pentecostal churches from the age of seven (7) years to twenty one (21) years when he was living with his aunt. When he joined the Christ Embassy Church, where he served as a cameraman, he had to leave it again after having strange dreams that he interpreted as initiation into Satanism. He did not like it and abandoned the Church. When he was converted and baptized into the SDAC, strange happenings and utterances happened to him that confirmed, according to him, that he was possessed by evil spirits. In this case, mobility, perceptions and personal religious insights may lead adherents to leave one denomination for another. Many adherents including some participants have left A.I.R due to negative perceptions and new religious insights.

Mushore, now a member of JAM had to abandon A.I.R which he had followed for twenty (20) years since childhood when his parents died and was now confronted with too many challenges. He was influenced and inspired by his co-workers in Bulawayo to join JAM (their church) and leave A.I.R which seemed not to provide him with spiritual support he so much needed. He was also inspired by their character and way of life. His case is an excellent example of how the search for well-being, both physical and spiritual can set in motion an endless search for a good life and edifying spiritual life. Prozesky (1984) argues that through religion, believers seek ultimate well-being. By this, he means both physical and spiritual wellness. In the same way, A.I.R should meet the spiritual needs of its followers for it to remain relevant especially today where churches are competing for membership.

Tarisai, who did not belong to any church up till 2008 and preferred solitary prayer was inspired by the Adventists whom she met during one of their outreach programs, when she visited her rural home area. Despite her prior disdain of the Adventists, she was inspired by their teaching on the need for congregational prayer and worship. William, a member of the ETM abandoned A.R after the death of his father who was a spirit medium and converted to the current denomination when he listened to one of their preachers and was convinced ‘ he was a messenger inspired by God’. Thus independent decision making plays a decisive role in the exercise of religious freedom conferred by the country’s constitution. Church offensive programs like the outreaches and other recruitment drives can have a positive bearing on membership. The belief common in A.R that by virtue of being African by descent, one is born in A.I.R, grows in it and dies in it (therefore making it unnecessary to propagate it) can no longer be trusted.

Tafadzwa left the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) after the death of her father when the church could not prophecy the cause of the illness that later led to his death. She had to join the ACC where there is prophecy. In the church, the family was told that the death of Tafadzwa’s father was a result of lack of unity in the extended family. It is very common in Zimbabwe today for people to be attracted to particular denominations for the sake of prophecy and to solve family and personal problems.

Recounting the problems that led her to change denominations, she alluded to Karl Marx's contention that "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people..." Austine, (2019). Thus spiritual healing and of late miracles of material things are attracting many people from A.Rs and mainstream churches to Pentecostal churches.

Thus from these two questions, the participants were either born in Christian families and had to follow the denominations of their families of birth or marriage, or were converted to some other denominations later in life due to various circumstances or as a result of independent decision making. Where the decision to become and remain Christian was occasioned by real life experiences, we can understand why the participants were zealous and uncompromising upholders of their faith.

#### **4.2.4 EXPERIENCE IN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION AND CURRENT ATTITUDE**

Through questions five (5) and six (6) and eight (8), the interview sought to establish the participants' prior encounter with A.I.R, reasons for leaving and what influences their current attitude to it. Seven (7) participants had never been involved in A.I.R either as an individual or as a family. Of the seven (7), six (6) were below twenty five years and were born in Christian families. Tarisai who was twenty nine years old did not belong to any religion until the age of eighteen. The participants who had no prior background and experience in A.R did not consider it as a true religion. They associated it with evil spirits, the devil and Satanism. They also considered it outdated and maintained that it had been superseded by Christianity.

For instance, Lindiwe maintained that A.I.R was outdated, old fashioned and her facial expression showed disdain. Tafadzwa argued that A.I.R was good and relevant before the coming of Christianity. With the advent of Christianity, A.R has been overtaken and replaced by Christianity. For her, it is now associated with bad spirits. She maintained that religious regalia such as various cloth are associated with evil spirits such as the alien spirits (mashavi). Her responses showed that she considered all spirits in A.I.R as bad.

Such misconceptions are very common in many Pentecostal churches today and are a deliberate misrepresentation of A.I.R aimed at winning African converts. The participants' negative perceptions were not based on any personal life experience but on preconceived ideas, hearsay information from the church and close associates. This confrontational and 'holier than-thou' attitude contradicts the need for dialogue with A.I.Rs and runs contrary to the spirit of ecumenism which is being muted in contemporary religious thought. As Shorter (op. cit:142) writes, "It is clear that in a pluralistic world, a homogeneous religious system that is trying to swallow up other systems is out of place. What is required is a differentiated system which is in real contact through religious dialogue with other systems of beliefs and values...".

It therefore became more pertinent for this group of participants to be exposed to first hand information through field work, participant and non participant observation methods of the phenomenological method. Writing about case studies, Cohen et al. (op.cit:290) note that they allow the participants to have access to phenomena so that they can observe for themselves and have correct understanding of the phenomena of investigation. As they write, " It is important in case studies for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted".

Three participants who have had personal experience in A.I.R still had a negative attitude to it but their negative perceptions were more informed. For instance, Esther thought the religion was true the time she followed it but her change to UAFC has now made her realize that the religion and its claims were not true. She now knows that it is God (Mwari) who gives rain not the ancestors. Although she was involved in ceremonies and rituals in this religion as a young woman, she now thinks that A.I.R and spirit possession were based on superstition and faulty thinking. While her father-in-law was a traditional medical practitioner and a rainmaker who was sent together with a delegation of rainmakers from other regions to the territorial shrine of Matonjeni in the Matopo hills, (thirty five kilometers south of the city of Bulawayo), she now believes these were old religious practices that have no place in today's Christian world. Her attribution of rain to God and not the ancestors showed poor understanding of the concept of God (Mwari), the ancestors and rain making ceremonies in A.I.R. It is a common misconception among

many Christians that members of this religion ask for rain from their ancestors. The intermediary role of the ancestral spirits in all facets of the indigenous African's religious life needs to be imparted among Christians of various denominations. According to A.I.R, God (and not the ancestors) is the ultimate source of every good.

Mushore, together with his parents, was involved in African religious rituals, up to the age of eighteen, and partook of food and drink consecrated to the ancestors. He argued that if A.I.R was true and efficacious, it should have protected him from all vulnerabilities he fell prey when he lost both parents. He chose to be converted to his new denomination because he was looking for 'a pillar of support'. It is the belief shared by many African converts to Christianity that A.R failed to protect them from predicaments and vicissitudes of life. In a show of ambivalence, Mushore added the old adage, 'One man's meat in another man's poison' to show that this religion may be good to those who follow it but it is 'poison' to him. This implies the perceived supremacy of Christianity over A.I.R. He however, as a preacher in his church hastened to warn against judging others by referring to Deuteronomy 29:29.

Kudzaishe's paternal grandfather used to conduct traditional ceremonies. Her paternal aunt was a spirit medium who often got possessed but had no one to continue with traditional religious practices when she died. She distanced herself from A.I.R and argued that it is true to the adherents and not to her. She alleged that spirits cause problem to the mediums such as failure to get married, or failure in ventures of modern life such as education, formal employment; insisting that the medium lives a traditional lifestyle. It was clear that the participant was visibly afraid and was in disbelief. The cause of her ill feelings were later revealed during the focus group discussion when she divulged that her extended family was troubled with a spirit of witchcraft and prostitution yet the ancestors were not protecting the family from these evil spirits. However, her claims were based on misconception of spirit possession, its procedures, and did not consider benefits associated with it. Tafadzwa believed that A.I.R had no place today since Christianity has brought new methods of communication with God.

In addition to their negative perceptions, this group of participants also indicated that telling their colleagues of their past experiences in A.I.R would invite criticism, negative

label and contempt. Esther felt it was embarrassing (zvinonyadzisa) and that she may risk being called a bad person (meaning an evil doer) and that many will laugh at her. Lindiwe concurred and added that most of her colleagues associate this religion with Satanism, a view that emanates mostly from their respective denominations. She alleged, ‘They hate it( that is A.I.R) for the love of their God’. The researcher also discovered that the participants’ attitude to this religion was partly due to their denominations’ doctrine and teaching about it. As a show of religious piety, the participants religiously followed these teachings; whether justified or not.

Thus, many students share the same attitude to A.I.R as the participants and think that it is diametrically opposed to the Christian faith such that any association with it poses danger to their faith. It is within this background that the researcher hopes that the phenomenological method will change both the negative attitude to A.I.R and increase knowledge of the same religion.

#### **4.2.5 ANY ASPECTS OF A.I.Rs THAT MAKE SENSE?**

Question seven (7) sought to find out if there are any aspects of A.I.Rs that make sense to the participants. This meant those aspects that they thought were practicable or realistic. Seven (7) participants out of ten (10) answered this question with a straight ‘no’. Esther mentioned asking for rain at the Matonjeni shrine in the Matopo hills which his father - in – law used to do when he was still alive. After the request and the rituals, rain would fall even before the delegates arrive back at their respective home areas. But now, she knows that it is God who gives rain and not the ancestors. This response shows a common misconception among many Christians that some Shona spirit mediums are ‘rain makers’.

This misconception comes from the use of the term ‘rain makers’ by many scholars on A.I.Rs to refer to the messengers to the Matonjeni shrine who embarked on a long journey to the shrine to ask for rain from God of the Matopo hills. Thus strictly speaking, they were not ‘rain makers’ but messengers who carried the people’s request for rain. Thus, from my point of view, the term was used figuratively but the participant interpreted it literally which is common with many African Christians.

Esther also witnessed spirit possession since her father-in-law was a spirit medium. When she was a member of A.I.R, she believed in spirit mediums and guidance by the spirits but now that she is a Christian, she is now convinced that these things were not true. Tafadzwa who maintained that nothing in A.I.R makes sense argued that Christianity brought new ways of communicating with God. Tarisai who had no personal experience in this took an ambivalent stance and suggested that in theory, requesting for rain makes sense. This implies that if she is exposed to phenomena in A.I.R through the phenomenological method, she is more likely to empathise with the adherents.

Jairos answered the question from the standpoint of the essences of religion and a comparative perspective. He argued that God is the same in all religions but is worshipped in different ways. He was alluding to Cox's step seven (7) in which the student of religion constructs the paradigmatic model which "enables the scholar to note similarities or describe differences among various traditions at any point within the classification of the phenomena..." (Cox, op.cit:36).

Lindiwe pointed out that the ancestors looked after the people before the advent of Christianity adding that today, the ancestors watch helplessly while her extended family is haunted by the spirit of witchcraft and prostitution. She was almost asking the question; a title of Bourdillon's book "Where are the Ancestors?" (Bourdillon, 1993). In this book, Bourdillon notes that when culture changes and people adapt to new ways of life, traditional religious beliefs lose their importance and that they must also change. Lindiwe also believes (though from hearsay) that traditional medical practitioners were able to cure cancer.

This reveals that preconceived ideas play an important role in shaping beliefs and that not all aspects of A.I.R are looked down upon. The researcher capitalized on Mushore, Lindiwe and Tarisai's openness, empathy and readiness to learn about this religion to effect a change of attitude in such participants through the use of the phenomenological method. From these participants' responses, the researcher noted that not all participants were influenced negatively by their Christian faith. Some participants like the three named above were also applying rationality and neutrality even before the



administration of the phenomenological method. This made the researcher very optimistic about the success of the phenomenological method.

#### **4.2.6 CURRENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND WHY THIS LEVEL?**

Question nine (9) and ten (10) sought to find out the current level of knowledge of concepts in A.I.R and why the participants were at that level. Participants who had not been involved in this religion admitted that their knowledge of concepts in A.I.R was very little, general and theoretical. The other reasons for this state of affairs was that since they were Christians, they had never practiced it. Notwithstanding the great responsibility upon their shoulders to teach religion effectively in the schools, Lindiwe acknowledged that in terms of knowledge she was no better than a child and an ordinary Christian.

This rudimentary knowledge was also affirmed by the participants' glaring and superfluous misconceptions of A.I.Rs during the interviews. For instance, when the researcher asked Heather if there were any aspects of these religions that made sense to her, she gave irrelevant examples of women's wrapping cloth (zambia), ordinary utensils like pots and dances. Their knowledge was admittedly theoretical as it was not based on experience but on hearsay. Many educationists for example Smart (op.cit.) concur that people learn through experience and emphasise the need for educators to employ experiential approaches in Religious and Moral Education. Harold Loukes emphasizes that all learning must proceed from experience. To him, good teaching is "a process of dialogue about experience" (Loukes cited in Nondo, 1991:16). The same applies to learning about religion. Cox (op.cit.) argues that the phenomenological method enables the student of religion to arrive at a definition of religion after experiencing the religion of the believers, not through reviewing literature on religion.

The participants who were exposed to A.I.Rs and practiced them at various stages of their lives had better knowledge than those who never experienced it. Yet the little knowledge was under threat from two frontiers namely early abandonment due to conversion to the Christian faith and lack of interest in further knowledge arising from fear of corrupting their faith and possible lapsing back to the old ways. Zvobgo (op.cit.) notes that between 1898 and 1923, Christian missionaries created Christian villages

where the converts were kept in order to keep them away from the pagan environment of their kith and kin.

For the same reason, many Christian Apostolic and Pentecostal churches discourage their members from taking part in African religious ceremonies; a factor which may militate against participant observation which is a fundamental aspect of the phenomenological approach. Heather said that her church doctrine discourages them from participating in traditional religious ceremonies and rituals, although they are allowed to contribute in cash or kind. Mushore also said the doctrine of his 'church' perceives A.I.Rs as demonic and satanic, which according to him should be revised since it discourages him from learning more about these religions. Due to the negative perception of A.I.Rs by his church, he has gradually lost interest in knowing more about them.

The protracted attack on African religious institutions since the coming of Christianity in the continent has swayed many African Christians to believe the propaganda of Christian missionaries and apologists. Many African people have forsaken the faith of their forefathers which they now perceive as old fashioned. The few adherents of A.I.Rs were a 'laughingstock' and suspects of witchcraft and sorcery. It has become proverbial to call a confused person an ancestral spirit ( mudzimu) or a slow decision maker, a traditional healer (n'anga), thus unjustifiably attacking and demeaning the very pillars of A.I.Rs. Today, the campaign against A.I.Rs by Pentecostal and Apostolic churches continues unabated. Thus the little and rudimentary knowledge of the participants was attributed to conversion to Christianity, church teaching and doctrine against A.I.Rs and the resultant lack of interest in these religions.

#### **4.2.7HOW KNOWLEDGE CAN BE ENRICHED**

Despite the negative attitude expressed during the interview, the researcher was encouraged by the participants' willingness to acquire more information and knowledge about A.I.Rs. The participants concurred that it was incumbent upon them and was in their best interests as future religious educators to acquire accurate information so that they can execute this duty diligently and do justice to Religious Education in the classroom. It was encouraging that among the methods suggested, phenomenological

procedures dominated. This was an early indicator of the ease and successful implementation of the phenomenological method later during fieldwork.

Among the methods of increasing knowledge suggested, carrying out a research study or investigation on a topic or concept of interest featured more frequently. During such study, consulting the elders and religious practitioners who are the custodians of the religion was suggested. Such methods would lead to personal interaction with the adherents who are the primary sources of religious data. Heather further suggested attending religious rituals and ceremonies and participant observation in such activities.

For Lindiwe, this was possible and would not compromise her faith as she will be doing this in order to learn. However, she set out one condition; not asking for or accepting anything from the religious practitioners. This pointed to the belief by many African Christians that religious objects and regalia in A.I.Rs are the abode of evil spirits and should be avoided at all costs. Mushore added that personal interactions and interviewing the believers may clear speculation and preconceived ideas that often lead to bias. Tafadzwa concurred that attending religious ceremonies and interaction with religious practitioners will greatly increase knowledge but suggested that looking for these in the neighborhood will cut costs. This alluded to the great cost tertiary institutions should be ready to incur should they decide to use the phenomenological method in teacher education.

Tarisai went further to suggest that the findings from fieldwork should be compared to the teachings of the Bible on the same concept. Those aspects that would be comparable are good, acceptable and can be adapted. This participant did not find it anathema to improve her faith through insights from A.I.Rs. However, she took the Christian Bible as the yardstick or the standard against which other religions should be judged; a mistake made by most of the participants in this research. While this may not be desirable, it revealed to the researcher the importance of comparative religion in understanding religious phenomena.

The other participants suggested reading scholarly texts, religious literature, research on the internet and formal lectures on topics of interest as ways of increasing knowledge.

This agrees with scholars on research who support the use of secondary data in qualitative research especially in the case study research design to complement findings from field work (that is primary data). In order to ensure that correct knowledge is accessed, students need to consult authoritative and scholarly text, electronic journals and relevant websites. Today, the internet is increasingly becoming an indispensable source of information in many areas of life.

The participants' preparedness to learn more about A.I.Rs demonstrated their desire to distinguish between their commitment as professing Christians and their duties and obligations as upcoming religious educationists. The interviews helped shed more light on the participants attitude to A.I.Rs, current level of knowledge and strategies that may be employed to enrich current knowledge. Cognisant of the glaring misconceptions noted from the interviews, the researcher conducted formal lectures with the participants on the phenomenological method, spirit possession and the traditional religious practitioner that is the *n'anga*.

#### **4.3 LECTURE 1: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD**

The researcher realized that the phenomenological method as the intervention strategy cannot be successfully implemented during fieldwork unless the participants appreciate the method and its procedures. The researcher conducted two one and half hour lectures on the method with the participants. The purpose of the lectures was to enhance the participants' understanding of the method through a general study of the development of philosophical phenomenology as a discipline and phenomenology of religion as a method of studying religion.

The researcher explained the development of the method by the German mathematician, Sir Edmund Husserl ((1859-1938) and the influence of pure science and philosophy upon Husserl's phenomenological method (Cox, op. cit:15-17).

The phenomenological method was presented as a scientific method of studying phenomena with procedures that should be followed in scientific investigations in order to get a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The link between philosophical phenomenology and phenomenology of religion was discussed with

participants appreciating that the later borrowed heavily from the former. Cox's nine steps of the phenomenological method were discussed (Cox, *ibid*:26-40). Being aware that the method and the terms it uses would be difficult for the participants to comprehend, the researcher had to simplify the concepts as much as possible. This was necessary since the success of fieldwork would largely depend on the extent to which the participants understood the method and can apply it. The following steps were discussed;

1. Suspending preconceptions, that is performing *epoche*
2. Interpolating new knowledge into existing knowledge with empathy
3. Maintaining neutrality that is *epoche*
4. Describing religious phenomena
5. Giving names to the phenomena
6. Describing the relationships and processes among the phenomena
7. Making a typical model of religious phenomena
8. Developing intuition into the meaning of religion and
9. Testing the insights.

( Adapted from Cox,*ibid*:26-40)

Of the nine ( 9) steps, steps 1-6 were more easily understood, though in theory. The participants appreciated the need for step 1 that is to perform *epoche* in order to avoid bias in any investigation. The same applies to step 3 (maintaining neutrality). The participants concurred that while the two steps were theoretically possible and necessary, in practice, it was difficult to get rid of preconceptions and bias. Misconceptions may be domiciled at the back of the mind and inevitably influence the investigator. One of the participants used a popular adage, ' it is difficult to teach an old dog new tricks' to illustrate the difficulty of completely erasing misconceptions and preconceived ideas on A.I.Rs.

The word ‘empathy’ in step two was familiar to most of the participants and was popularly defined as ‘ putting ones’ self in the shoes of the other person’ and was successfully applied to the study of religion. To ‘interpolate’( in the same step) was rather difficult so the researcher had to explain and illustrate the term more cautiously.

The participants noted that Steps 4 and 5 (that is describing the phenomena and naming it) requires the investigator to be familiar with the language of the adherents if they are to describe and name the phenomena accurately. On step six, the researcher noted that once the student or investigator follows the proceedings carefully and where possibly participating during phenomenological investigations, they should be able to describe the processes and the relationships among the phenomena. This understanding may be enhanced by interacting with the believers and questioning them on the sequence of events and relationships between and among episodes. The ability to relate the events will be a good indicator of the mastery of this step. As with the other steps, this calls for a deeper understanding of the ritual or ceremony being studied.

Step seven that is constructing the paradigmatic model was explained as a step towards understanding the essence of religion through identifying the important elements such as ritual, song and dance, sacrifice, religious attire, religious practitioners et cetera. Once they are identified, the observer or investigator puts them into categories of the same phenomena in different religions. Through constructing a typical model of religious phenomena, the investigator moves from a localized understanding of religious phenomena (under study) to a universal understanding of religion. Thus, Cox (ibid:36) writes, “What the observer learned through his insight into the meaning of the phenomena of a specific tradition can be used to analyse similar phenomena derived from other traditions”.

At this stage, the participants illustrated their understanding of the paradigmatic model by listing the essences of A.I.R and compared them with similar phenomena in Christianity. They were quick to infer that in many ways A.I.R was similar to Christianity. This comparative approach was very popular with the participants throughout the research. This led this researcher to have keen interest in understanding the function of comparative religion in phenomenological investigations.

Step eight( intuiting the meaning of religion), was presented and discussed as the culmination of steps one to seven whose aim was to lead the investigator to an understanding of what A.I.R religion is all about, that is, its meaning to the believers. If the previous steps were done effectively, the observer should now be able to define what A.I.R is, thus attempting to define religion substantively. Thus Cox (ibid.:37) notes that while the investigator begins with a working definition at the beginning of the investigation, they end up with a substantive definition of religion based on personal experience of the phenomena.

The two lectures were successful as the participants were able to grasp the basic concepts and procedures of each of the nine concepts at least in theory. Through other activities such as field work and focus group discussions, the researcher deepened and built on this foundation, thus transforming this theoretical information to practical application.

#### **4.4 A VISIT TO A LOCAL TRADITIONAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONER**

The phenomenological method requires the student of religion to depend on primary data obtained through interaction with religious phenomena so that the phenomena speaks for itself. This is a critical precondition for the creation of new knowledge that is based on evidence and free from bias. Case studies by their very nature require the observer to get into the field and study cases of interest. The traditional medical practitioner is a religious practitioner in A.I.R and constitutes a kind of phenomena not only in form of his or her person, but also in the form of religious object, artifacts and regalia that are used. For these reasons, the researcher and the participants visited a traditional medical practitioner in order to avail opportunity for the participants to interact directly with this form of religious phenomena and possibly appreciate the role and function of this important practitioner in this religion.

Since the traditional medical practitioner was one of the most misunderstood concept and yet one of the pillars of A.I.R, the researcher organized a visit to a local traditional healer (n'anga). The purpose of the visit was to enable the participant to have firsthand account of the practitioner's call to service, modes of operation, tools of the trade, rules governing the profession and the healer's understanding of himself and his work. It was an opportunity

to correct the participants' misconceptions noted during the lecture on spirit possession and the *n'anga*.

The work of the *n'anga* can be understood within the Shona understanding of sickness, health and well being. Chavhunduka (1978) distinguishes between two types of illness among the Shona; the normal and abnormal sicknesses. It is with the abnormal sickness that the Shona people are worried about more. However, when normal sickness persists and does not respond to western medicine, it is considered abnormal and attributed to witchcraft and sorcery, alien spirits, avenging spirits or even ancestral spirits. For such illness and misfortune, the Shona people consult the *n'anga* who is able, through a special calling and training, to diagnose the spiritual cause of illness and misfortune. Chavhunduka (ibid:19) emphasizes the importance of the *n'anga* in Shona society, "...the traditional healer is... not only...a medicine-man, but also a religious consultant, a legal and political adviser, a police detective, a marriage counselor and a social worker". Thus the *n'anga* is one of the pillars of the Shona people's spiritual beliefs, perhaps more important than the ancestral spirits. It was the researcher's contention that the participants' understanding and appreciation of the role of the *n'anga* would unlock a broader appreciation of the ancestral spirits, spirit possession and A.I.Rs in general.

The researcher made two preparatory visits to the *n'anga* prior to the actual visit with the participants. After the researcher explained the purpose of the intended visit, the traditional healer, sekuru Zhou (not his real name) asked whether the researcher would like the participants to speak to the spirits, that is calling the spirits to possess the medium or simply speak to the man without spirit possession. Desiring that the participants see for themselves spirit possession, the researcher opted for the former (that is calling the spirit) but after being warned that once the medium is possessed, he may utter even confidential information like personal and family secrets in the presence of all, the researcher with the concurrence of the participants opted for the latter (that is speaking to the man).

The participants, the researcher and the *n'anga* agreed that some personal information was not for public consumption. If certain information that was deliberately hidden from the participants by their families is revealed, the affected participants may later question their families over the issues leading to family disputes that may be traced back to this research,



the College and the parent Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development. The participants unanimously resolved that those who want to call the spirits may do so on their own and ‘at their own risk’ that is the risk of being told disappointing revelations.

To the researcher, this fear showed on one hand that the *n’anga* was both sure of his mystical power and wanted to abide by the code of conduct for traditional healers concerning confidentiality. On the other hand, the participants’ fear of exposure implied that some believed in the power of the *n’anga* to know hidden things despite their disapproval and contempt of the *n’anga* when they are in public.

Before the visit, the participants prepared the questions that they would ask and agreed on the following questions;

1. How did you become a *n’anga*?
2. Do you like your job?
3. What problems do you usually attend to?
4. What instruments or tools do you use?
5. Are there any rules that govern your work?
6. Do you go to church?

#### **4.4.1 BECOMING A N’ANGA**

During the visit, the researcher introduced the participants and *sekuru* Zhou, paid a token of appreciation and outlined the purpose of the visit. After these preliminaries, *Sekuru* described how he became an *n’anga*. While he was still a young boy aged eighteen (now seventy), he was bothered by an illness that did not respond to Western medicine. This disturbed him a lot as he could not carry out some of the work that was done by boys of his age. Medical doctors could not diagnose the cause of the illness. This went on for some time until the elders in the family decided to consult a *n’anga* in the locality about the nagging illness.

The *n'anga* informed the family delegation that the illness was caused by the boy's great grandfather who was a renowned traditional healer who wants to pass on this special gift on the boy. The family visited two other traditional healers who concurred with the first. This was some kind of triangulation to ensure the reliability of information. Chavhunduka ( ibid) notes that making a family member sick is one way by which the ancestral spirits communicate their intentions.

The delegation was told of the regalia and artifacts to buy for the spirit. These included, a bow and arrow, a small hunting spear, a big spear, a small hunting axe (gano), a head dress (ngundu), a snuff container ( nhekwe/ chibako), a knobkerrie (tsvimbo), three types of cloth; one red in colour, one white and black, and one consisting of a mixture of black, white and red ( gungwe).

The family was directed on how to brew traditional beer for the *bira* to welcome the spirits as the boy was going to be a medium of more than one spirit. The family was to call the *n'anga* to give them further directions during the ceremony. Chavhunduka (ibid:19) observed that there are mainly two ways by which a person became a traditional healer namely by inheritance from the ancestors who were healers during their life time, or inheriting the gift from the spirit of a foreigner ( shavi). The second way is through training under a traditional healer.

After the preparations, the day of the ceremony was characterized by singing, dancing, drinking and eating. Other spirit mediums were also invited. The young man Zhou who was also dancing and singing got possessed by his great grandfather, who after identifying himself explained the gift of healing that he had wished to give to his grandson for some time now but has been prevented. The spirit was also coming with an alien spirit famous for hunting. Thus Zhou was a spirit medium of his ancestor who bestowed on him the spirit of healing through traditional medicine and a medium of a hunting alien spirit (shavi). Since then, sekuru Zhou has practiced traditional healing and is a great hunter. The answer to this question helped participant realise that spirit possession was real and that ancestral spirits desire to impart benevolent spirits and skills that benefit the living family members.

#### **4.4.2 ATTITUDE TO THE JOB.**

Sekuru Zhou indicated that at the beginning, when he was a young man, he did not like being a *n'anga* as he wanted to pursue western education and get a white collar job like many of his age. Being a *n'anga*, though highly valued and respected in Shona society, it was believed to be a profession of older people. As for now, he likes his job and enjoys helping people from different walks of life and see them relieved of their problems and illness. He is visited by many and is called to places far and near making new acquaintances. In addition, he gets some income through the consultation fees he charges his patients whom he asks to pay after their problems are solved. Due to gratitude, some patients pay more than what was stipulated. Chavhunduka (ibid:23) criticises urban traditional healers who advertise their competence and ask for payment before they see the results of their interventions. Such practices make their clients doubt their ingenuity. However, the job has its risks; for instance some evil spirits are dangerous and powerful. They may not be exorcised easily and often fight the exorcist. The *n'anga* is often the target of witches and sorcerers who want to test their power. Many false *n'angas* have perished from attacks by these powers.

Thus, from sekuru Zhou's account, being a *n'anga* is a calling which may be contrary to one's dream career. It is enjoyable, adventurous, beneficial to the *n'anga* and the patient and also dangerous to the practitioner.

#### **4.4.3 PROBLEMS ATTENDED.**

Like many other traditional healers, sekuru Zhou attended to a wide range of problems and situations. These include sickness, bad luck, failure in securing a man or woman for marriage, luck in betting, failure to have children in marriage, achieving spirit possession, recovering lost property, protection from witchcraft etcetera.

The main function of the *n'anga* is to heal the sick through traditional medicine. Gelfand (cited in Chavhunduka, ibid:24-25) distinguishes three types of Shona traditional medicine namely common medicines that can be recommended and administered by anyone who knows them and medicines administered by a traditional healer during a

ceremony. The second group of medicines are those medicines used to harm others. Lastly there are preventative medicines meant to prevent and protect people from harm.

Sekuru Zhou like other genuine *n'angas* did not practice harmful medicines ( that is the second group of medicines). He emphasised that his main function, like many other true *n'angas* was to promote well being; both physical and spiritual. His spirits do not allow him and will punish him with illness or misfortune if he uses medicines to harm others; even his enemies. At this point, the participants looked comfortable as they were correcting the preconceptions they previously had about the *n'anga* as a harmful person who should be avoided. Many people dread consulting the *n'anga* for the perceived ambivalence in the use of his or her mystical powers. The participants realized that this misconception was clearly against evidence.

#### **4.4.4 TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

Sekuru Zhou's account of how he became an *anga* has already revealed some of the religious artifacts and regalia that are used in connection with spirit possession. In his practicing room, the participants had the privilege on seeing the actual regalia and artifacts alluded to. These include the following;

##### **4.4.4.1 The head dress (ngundu)**

This head gear is made of long birds' feathers, black in colour and sewn on a black elastic cloth facing an upward direction. This is worn on the head and identifies one as a traditional healer.

##### **4.4.4.2 Cloth with mixture of black, white and red colours ( Gungwe/ retso/ rotso)**

Like the other cloth, this cloth is bought by the medium and kept in his suitcase and worn on special occasions. It is for those with a hunting spirit. Sekuru Zhou described how the medium petitions the spirit for relish using snuff, ties the cloth around his neck or waist when going out for hunting in order to invite the spirit which may possess the medium and enables him to know where wild animals are. Once possessed, the medium becomes a skillful hunter (*hombarume*), able to run after the animal with exceptional speed and aims at it with his arrow with precision.

Zhou related how he used to be a renowned hunter when he was still living in the rural area of Gokwe. He also added that the hunting spirit can protect the medium from dangerous wild animals by dodging them or fighting them with extra strength. This explains why most of these mediums have skins of dangerous wild animals like the lion and the leopard from which they make *nguwo* (dress) tied around the waist during ceremonial dances. Some are simply hung inside their houses. At this stage, the participants saw the relationship between and among religious phenomena, beliefs and ritual.

#### **4.4.4.3 Plain black and white cloth (Mberikunashe)**

This cloth is for the ancestral spirits. It is made of black cloth which is sewn on to white cloth in similar proportions. Sekuru Zhou explained that the black cloth represents the living members of the family while the pure white cloth represents the spirit world. The design and colour combination is a symbolic representation of the connection between humanity and the spirit world. The two that is humanity and the spirit world are indispensable and connected together in a symbiotic relationships just as the two cloth are sewn together. The colour white is also symbolic of the moral worthiness of the dead who qualify to be ancestral spirits. This concurs with Zhou's assertion that the ancestors are morally upright deceased members of the family and are custodians of morality. Zhou wraps this cloth around him when he wants to invite the ancestral spirit.

#### **4.4.4.4 Red cloth**

The colour red represents blood. This cloth is used by those mediums with a fighting spirit. These are spirits of great warriors of the past. Zhou explained that in the past, skills in fighting were very important as tribes fought each other to take control of natural resources such as land, minerals and even family resources such as domestic animals and women. The continued existence of the tribe depended on the strength, resilience and skills of their men in fighting their enemies. Even today, bravery and the defense of a man's household is a virtue inculcated in every male member of the family.

For this reason, every male head of the household is expected to have artifacts like a bow and arrow (uta nemuseve), a small hunting spear, a big spear, a small hunting axe ( gano), a knobkerrie ( tsvimbo), big knife (bakatwa). Although they are no longer in use today, they are kept and treasured as symbols of the father's protection of his household. These symbols are drawn from a people's history and represent their livelihoods. Cox(1996:76) correctly notes, " The oral traditions of the family are preserved in the rituals...Beliefs are... contained in the rituals, songs, dances, and mythic symbols".

#### **4.4.5 RULES GOVERNING PRACTICE**

According to sekuru Zhou, the *n'anga* is governed by two types of regulations namely the ancestral and government regulations. The ancestral spirits of whom the *n'anga* is a medium require that the medium should strive by all means to live a morally upright life. This does not mean that the medium ceases to be an ordinary human being prone to sin in his or her day-to- day life but that they should refrain from such sin as sexual promiscuity, sorcery, hate and any divisive behavior to the family or community. The *n'anga* should be a person of good repute. This is in keeping with the ancestor's demands for morality and harmony among the family members and in the community.

Failure to obey this regulation leads to punishment of the medium with misfortune or ill luck. In protest against immorality, the spirit may fail to come ( that is manifest) when called to do so or may depart from the medium altogether and look for a better host. One participant later recounted how his relative who was a spirit medium failed to take heed of the warning from the ancestors against sexual promiscuity; was taken mysteriously up the roof of the thatched hut and was made to fall inside the hut onto a pot with boiling water and burnt his arm. The overarching principle is to use the gifts of the spirit for the good and well being of the family and society.

The government of Zimbabwe through the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council (T.M.P.C.) Act of 1981 recognises the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association ( ZINATHA) as the association of the Traditional Medical Practitioners in the country. The association regulates membership, practice and conduct of the

traditional healers (Traditional Medical Practitioners Council Act,1981). Zhou showed the participants his practicing certificate that was securely hang on the wall. To become a member of the association, Zhou's spirit mediumship and the healing ability conferred was tested by senior *n'angas* and a certificate issued.

The member is expected to abide by the rules and regulations of the association one of which is to abide by the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899, as revised in 1989 and 2001 which outlaws the use of unnatural means to cause disease or injury to a person or animal. It also forbids practicing witchcraft or supplying witchcraft materials ([veritaszim.net/node/122](http://veritaszim.net/node/122)).

Thus through ZINATHA, the practice and conduct of the traditional medical practitioners was professionalized with the major goal being benevolence and well being of society. Failure to abide by the organisation's code of conduct leads to disciplinary action. Depending on the gravity of the offence, the practitioner may be suspended or the practicing certificate may be cancelled. Only fully accredited members are allowed to practice as *n'angas*. Practicing without a certificate is an offence punishable by imprisonment or a fine.

The visit to the *n'anga* was an eye opener to the modes of operation and code of conduct of the *n'anga* who is one of the most dreaded and most negatively perceived practitioner by the Christians. As a result of the interaction with the phenomena, the participants realized that the work of the *n'anga* was to promote well being and was governed by government and ancestral regulations.

#### **4.4.6 MEMBERSHIP TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

The participants asked sekuru Zhou if he was a member of a Christian denomination. The participants wanted to find out if spirit mediumship and use of traditional medicine was a hindrance to being a Christian. Sekuru Zhou said he was himself a member of one of the mainstream churches and goes to church every Sunday when he has no pressing issues with his clients. He explained that being an *'anga* does not prohibit one from being a Christian as both members of A.I.R and Christians worship the same God who makes the same demands of morality and right living.

He also noted that ancestral spirits as lieutenants of the great spirit *Mwari* enforce morality and ethics among the living on His behalf. Writing about the Shona –speaking people of Zimbabwe’s belief in *Mwari* (God), Thorpe (1991:55) notes that matters to do with personal problems, ethics and good living are enforced by the ancestors, adding that it would be ‘presumptuous’ to consult *Mwari* over these. For Sekuru Zhou, there is no need to quarrel over which way leads to God since people of various cultures use various ways that lead to the same destination.

He added that the good spirits that possess mediums in A.I.R are the same spirits that possess church members in Christian denominations and make them speak in tongues, exorcise, prophesy and do miracles. To him, the good spirits all come from the same God. Zhou’s claim represents the accommodative attitude of A.I.R to other faiths. Shorter (op cit:142) argues that Christianity should abandon its ‘holier - than - thou’ attitude and the claim to be the only true religion. It should consider various cultures and religions as alternative systems that lead to the truth. He notes, “It is clear that in a pluralistic world, a homogeneous religious system that is trying to swallow up other systems is out of place. What is required is a differentiated system which is in real contact through religious dialogue with other systems of belief and values...” ( Shorter, ibid:142).

The fieldwork and interview with the n’anga helped shed light on the initiation, operation and rules governing the n’anga. As a result of the interaction with this form of religious phenomena, the participants corrected some of the misconceptions and bias they previously had. Thus, they were able to study religious phenomena from inside which is one of the pillars of the phenomenological method.

## **4.5 LECTURE 2: SPIRIT POSSESSION AND THE TRADITIONAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONER( THE N’ANGA)**

Due to the interconnection between spirit possession and traditional medical practice, the lectures on spirit possession and the *n’anga* were combined. This lecture was necessitated by misconceptions that the participants showed during the interviews; for instance, the belief that the ancestral and alien spirits are evil and that the traditional healer who often got possessed by various spirits that empowered them to do various healing and divinatory



works were agents of the devil. From the interviews, it emerged that this misconception was a result of mere ignorance on one hand and the negative teaching of the various Christian denominations on the other, in their protracted fight against A.I.R.

Even after the visit to the *n'anga* and the *bira* ceremony, the participants still had some misconceptions around the work of the *n'anga* and spirit possession. Despite the merits of fieldwork and direct interaction with phenomena required by the phenomenological method, it was difficult for the participants to grasp all the aspects in the limited time given. It was therefore necessary to conduct this lecture in order to augment the information gained from fieldwork. A correct understanding of the spiritual beliefs of the Shona people is central to an appreciation of their religion.

The main objective of the lecture was to explain and illustrate that A.I.R distinguishes between good and bad spirits and that the *n'anga's* main function is to fight evil spirits. Mbiti (1975:70-78) discusses various types of spirits namely nature spirits of the sky and the earth, and human spirits of those who died long back and those who died more recently. Mbiti (ibid:79) further notes that it is difficult to classify spirits as either good or bad since the majority of the spirits can do good and harm on the people "... just as people do both good and evil to their fellow human beings". He also argues that these spirits were created by God, are under Him and may be sent by God to perform certain things among the living.

However, the Shona people associate good spirits with benevolence for example good health, the provision of necessities of life, good luck, employment, success in ventures like hunting, business, agriculture and marriage, protection from evil etcetera. In return, the living show reverence and appease these spirits. Gelfand (1977:91) notes that the ancestral spirit "...protect his grandchildren on earth from all ills and gives them their character, personality and good behavior".

On the other hand, bad spirits are responsible for misfortunes that befall individual people and families. They may cause sickness, bad luck, failure in the ventures stated above, accidents, premature death et cetera. Since they are malevolent, they are avoided, despised and exorcised when they happen to have found a human host in the family. Families and individuals enlist the services of the traditional medical practitioners and ancestral spirits

to protect themselves from evil and bad spirits. Examples of bad spirits were readily given by the participants as avenging spirits, spirit of witchcraft and sorcery, spirit of an aunt who died without a husband and now causing her brother's daughters not to marry, some alien spirits that cause exceeding anger et cetera.

Some participants thought that ancestral spirits were evil spirits (*mweya yetsvina*). This was the teaching of their Pentecostal Churches whose doctrine teach that the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and that they no longer have anything to do with the living. Thus these participants were making the common mistake of judging one religious tradition with another. In this case, Christian Pentecostalism was used as the yard stick for measuring concepts in A.I.R. This tendency was very common among the participants. During the interviews, Tarisai argued that if what A.I.R says is found in the Bible, then A.R is true and good. Conversely, if it is not approved by the Christian Bible, then A.I.R is false.

The researcher explained the criteria for the dead to become ancestral spirits. The spirits of those who die without having a child (Gelfand, op. cit:92) and by the same token those who die without having been married, spirits of people of bad morals, witches, sorcerers, those who commit suicide are not brought home through the bringing home ceremony. These do not become ancestral spirits. Due to vice, their spirits are left to wonder outside the homestead and kept away from the living relatives. For the same reasons, alien spirits that bring all kinds of vice are not accepted. Through ceremony and ritual, the evil spirits are exorcised and kept at a safe distance from the living through the use of charms (Bourdillon, op. cit:80). Only those who left children of their own, and were virtuous become ancestors. Some participants doubted the benevolence of the ancestral spirits and asked why the ancestors punish the living if they are good spirits?

Due to their Christian background, all the participants preferred to consult the prophets and pastors of their denominations rather than going to the *n'anga* over their personal problems. The reasons for this preference were varied. The participants concurred that their churches did not allow them to consult *n'angas*. Three participants (that is 30%) whose age ranges were between thirty two (32) and forty two (42) therefore older, and have had some previous experience in A.I.R pointed out that the *n'angas* failed them or their families

in the past. They also argued that consulting them is old fashioned ( ndezvakare) and that they have been overtaken by prophets and pastors today.

One participant from this group, Mushore who seemed to be more accommodative to other religions, rational and objective argued that spiritual healing is the main attraction of congregants to Pentecostal Churches. He made a claim which stunned the other participants that some pastors and prophets use the same spirit used by the n'angas to diagnose the source of spiritual problems and to heal. He argued that if a church pastor who has the gift of spiritual healing leaves the church, the same spirit used in the church will make the person become a n'anga. The opposite was also true. If the n'anga is converted to the church, he or she will prophesy and do spiritual healing using the same spirit. To him, this was evidence that a good spirit can either work in the church or in the traditional setting.

This lecture and the discussion that ensued revealed that despite the direct interaction with the n'anga during the visit to the traditional medical practitioner, the participants still harboured some misconception about the ancestral spirits and the n'anga. This implies that the phenomenological principle of studying religion from inside, field work and taking the believer's point of view may not quickly convince the observer and make them change attitude immediately. The observer needs time to ponder, interpret and evaluate what has been seen and heard. It is difficult to take the evidence of the believer at face value. Older participants with prior religious experience in A.I.Rs, who constituted thirty percent (30%) more readily understood concepts discussed in the lecture. Even though they did not believe in the n'anga, their disbelief was better informed and based on evidence. Church doctrine against A.I.Rs and rationality were important determinants of the participants' attitude to these religions. Mushore and Tarisai's attitude to these religions was influenced more by rational thinking as opposed to the pious attitude of their colleagues hence Mushore's claim that the same spirit working in the church is the same spirit working in A.I.Rs. This may suggest that the phenomenological method can be enhanced by the development of rational thinking in RE.

## **4.6 FIELDWORK: THE BIRA CEREMONY**

### **4.6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Being cognisant of the importance placed on fieldwork and observations in phenomenological investigations, the researcher and the participants attended a *bira* ceremony at the Hasha homestead in Chiundura communal lands in order to observe the ceremony and see how the phenomenological method can be applied to it. This section is in three parts namely a description of the ceremony, a discussion of the phenomena from the point of view of the spirit medium, and the application of the phenomenological method to the ceremony.

The mainly descriptive nature of the section is an attempt to conform to the principle of *epoche* and the need to maintain it throughout the phenomenological investigation. Applying the phenomenological method to the ceremony enabled the participants to achieve a better understanding and appreciation of concepts in A.I.R. However, some challenges with the application of the method were also experienced as shall be discussed below.

#### **4.6.2 BACKGROUND**

Chiundura communal lands is situated approximately forty kilometers North –East of the Midlands Provincial capital city of Gweru. It is under the jurisdiction of the paramount traditional chief Gambiza of the Moyo totem. Due to many years of migrations in and out of the area, this area is now home to a variety of people of different ethnic origins namely the Karanga, Zezuru and the Ndebele speaking people. Due to its proximity to the city of Gweru, many urban dwellers have bought small pieces of land and built homes in the area, making the population mixed and the region cosmopolitan.

The Karanga speaking peoples, like the other peoples in the area have maintained their indigenous religion to a great extent. Despite modernity, advancement in science and technology and many years of Christian influence, Karanga indigenous religion has survived the turbulences caused by these western influences as it commands a good following today. Many Karanga people in the area, despite being professing Christians, see no harm in carrying out indigenous religious practices especially where the older generation of people are still in existence. Even though the younger generation is

outwardly Christian, inwardly they are African and governed by tradition and indigenous religious beliefs.

The Karanga speaking people are a subgroup of the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe and are mainly found in Masvingo Province. Bourdillon (op.cit) cited in Cox (op.cit:64) notes that the Shona speaking people are part of the Bantu people who migrated from the mythical region called Guruhuswa ( meaning area of big grass); a region believed to be situated around the present day Tanzania. These migrants are believed to have arrived in the present day Zimbabwe around the second century CE ( Bourdillon, 1987:7). According to Chavhunduka (1978), there are six dialects spoken among the Shona namely Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndaou and Kalanga.

These people speak Karanga, a dialect of the Shona language and are reputed for keeping their traditions wherever they are found. Due to their conservative nature, the name ‘mukaranga’ is used proverbially to mean a conservative man or woman who takes pride in their traditional beliefs and customs despite western education and social status. The Karanga people like other Shona and African people believe in the ancestors for whom many ceremonies and rituals are held from time to time. The belief in ancestral spirits is one of the pillars of Karanga A.I.R.

The *bira* is one of the ceremonies held to show honour and reverence to the ancestors of the clan or extended family. The word ‘bira’ is derived from the karanga word ‘kupira’ which literally means to give, to offer or to present. The ‘*bira*’ is therefore a ceremony in which the living people summon their ancestors, commune with them through food and drink, while at the same time thanking them for the protection, privileges and opportunities they provide. The clan comes together once in a while and conduct a big ceremony to remember their ancestors and seek their guidance.

As part of the preparations, family elders come together and decide to have a *bira* to remember their ancestors. They may make this decision out of their own volition or they may make such decision after experiencing a series of calamities about which they may consult a *n’anga* who may diagnose the spiritual cause of their misfortune as the ancestors who are ‘thirsty’ or need to be remembered. Another indicator of the need to

have a *bira* may be a troublesome bull dedicated to one of the ancestors (Gelfand, op. cit:91) which may not spend nights in the kraal with the other cattle, or always strays and eats the crops belonging to the neighbours. These may be interpreted as signs for the need for a *bira*. This was the cause for the Hash family's decision to consult an *'anga* and conduct a *bira*.

The researcher and the participants did not witness the consultation of the *n'anga* and the other preparations since they were done days before the actual ceremony. The information on the preparations was obtained from the eldest member of the family who acted as the director of ceremonies, the family spokesperson and our informant. In A.I.R, the eldest male member of the family or clan is by virtue of his age and seniority, a family religious practitioner who can communicate with the spirit world on behalf of the family or clan.

After the decision is made, a small amount of millet is taken, put in a wooden plate or gourd. The eldest male member of the family and other members enter the kitchen hut of the household and goes to the 'chikuva'. Whilst kneeling and bare footed, he addresses the ancestors in their hierarchy, beginning with the latest to have joined the spiritual world (junior) up to the eldest (most senior) who should pass the communication to the ancestors they remember by name and those they can no longer remember and ultimately the creator; Musikavanhu of their intention to conduct a *bira* and brew traditional beer with the millet in his hands. The following words may be said;

You, our ancestors who have gone into the spirit world before us (mentioning the names of the ancestors beginning with the most recently departed). We, your children remember you and are grateful for your protection. With this millet we are preparing you beer so that you quench your thirst. We beseech you to guide us in these preparations.

Once the address is over, those present clap hands while women ululate to show honour and joy. The millet is then mixed with the rest of the millet that will be used to prepare beer, soaked in water until it begins to germinate. It is then placed in the sun to dry.

Once dry it is ground on the traditional grinding stone (guyo). Beer that is dedicated to the ancestors is brewed with millet only; ground on the grinding stone and is stored in two separate pots. The rest of the beer can be made from millet and mealie meal.

The beer is brewed by old women who are past child bearing age, no longer menstruating and who no longer have sexual intercourse with men. These women are considered ritually clean and morally upright. One of the participants drew parallels with the Jewish scriptures regarding ritual purification laws on women on their monthly cycles ( Leviticus 15:19-29). Young boys and girls who have not had sexual intercourse are allowed to assist with the preparation of the beer. If prohibited persons get into contact with the beer, the utensils used for its preparation or even touch the fire hood in the fire place, the beer gets spoiled and the function will not achieve the desired goal. The beer is therefore jealously guarded from those who may deliberately want to spoil it until it is handed to the master of ceremonies.

Well before the ceremony, the researcher was informed by Hasha, one of his students that there would be a *bira* at their home. He visited the home with the student who introduced the researcher and explained the purpose of the visit. The fact that the researcher was known to the student and was accompanied by the student assisted in the granting of the request to bring some students on the day of the *bira* to learn about the traditional ceremony. Howard et al (op. cit.) notes that the researcher should have and use interpersonal skills to negotiate with gatekeepers who have the prerogative to allow or deny entry to a research site. The researcher paid some money as a token of appreciation.

#### **4.6.3 THE CEREMONY**

The day of the ceremony was a Saturday. The researcher, the participants and the student who was a member of the family arrived early in the morning in order not to miss any proceedings. This was possible since travel arrangements were made in advance. From this time onwards, the participants personally observed the procedures. The eldest member of the family who was the master of ceremonies gathered all close members of the family into the kitchen hut of the homestead. Fortunately, the researcher and

participants were allowed in the hut and introduced to the family members. The environment became solemn. All those who entered the hut had to leave their shoes and stockings outside.

The master of ceremonies took a small horn ( *chibako*) decorated with beads containing snuff , rolled his trousers to the knees, knelt near the *chikuva*, sniffed some snuff a couple of times and started to address the ancestors;

‘You, our fore bearers, who have gone before us. We, your children remember you and honour you. Here is the beer that we have prepared you to quench your thirst. Lead, protect and guide us with kindness and soft hands. We are young and sometimes make mistakes. We beseech you not to correct us through harsh means. We have among us friends and relatives who have come to enjoy with us. We also have school children who have come to learn their tradition and customs’.

As he was addressing the ancestors, two clay pots and a gourd were handed to him. As he was speaking, he took beer using the gourd and poured it sparingly around but outside the clay pots so that some of it poured onto the floor. One pot was addressed to the paternal ancestors and the other to the maternal ancestors. Once the address was over, there was great ululation by women and clapping of hands by men. Those participants who have had no contact with A.I.R looked perplexed and watched curiously. Those who have had some experience with the religion looked comfortable and enjoyed the proceedings.

After the address in the hut, the delegation proceeded to the cattle kraal, where a brown bull was selected and given to the ancestors as their relish. Afterwards, the bull was slaughtered and the meat was prepared as relish. Sadza, made from maize meal was also prepared and served to all those present. The preparation and serving of food was done by the sons-in-law (*vakuwasha*).

Five participants refused to participate in the proceedings and did not partake of food or drink that was served. They argued that as Christians, they cannot partake of food offered to the ancestors. Fearing that they may be possessed by the evil spirits (*mashavi*), they preferred to observe the proceedings rather than participate (



participant observation). The researcher anticipated this and made contingent plans by providing alternative food. Heather, who enjoys traditional dancing and was a member of the traditional dance club at the college participated in dancing and singing but did not partake of the food.

#### **4.6.3.1 Attire, Music, Dance and Artifacts**

There was a lot of dancing, singing and ululation. All this was done in the hut which was big enough to accommodate thirty people. The dancers put on traditional attire made of animal skins and head dress made of bird feathers. Some wrapped around themselves black and white cloth, others red, while others wrapped on red and black cloth. There was beating of drums (ngoma) made of wood and animal skin.

The dancers took turns to dance at the centre, each exhibiting their own skill. Some women played the shakers and rattles. A type of shakers called *magagada* were tied behind the legs. These produced a rhythmic rattling sound as the dancers danced to the sound of the drums (ngoma). The researcher noticed that even the five (5) participants who were watching at a distance enjoyed the singing and dancing. Three participants namely Heather, Jairos and Mushore tried to sing and imitate the dances but did not do well since they did not know the songs and dances. Dancers who got tired went out of the hut to give room to those outside who also wanted to come in and dance. Those who were outside also had beer and food including some passers-by. Some dancers had spears (mapfumo), others knobkerries (tsvimbo), while others had short hunting spears (makano).

Different songs were sung for example *Mudzimu dzoka* (Ancestors come), *Mhondoro dzinomwa muna Save* (Lions drink in the Save river), *Mudzimu mukuru chirege chinya* (Great ancestors should not be angry) et cetera. As people were dancing and singing, a male member of the family who had been dancing for some time without taking a break started to shake himself and made unintelligible sounds. All attention was now focused on him. He had *mberikunashe* cloth around his shoulders and *gungwe* cloth around his waist. People stopped singing and dancing and sat in front of the man who was getting possessed. Women were ululating while men clapped their hands. The master of

ceremonies knelt before the man who was soon going to be a spirit medium and addressed him with the following words while clapping hands;

‘Arrive well uncle.(Svikai zvakanaka vasekuru) Do not be angry, your children will be frightened. Talk to your children. We are all listening’.

The spirit became calm and asked for drinking water to quench thirst. Water in a wooden plate was quickly provided. The master of ceremonies took some snuff ( mudhombo), put it in the water and gave it to the spirit medium to drink. At this point, all people not closely related to the family including the researcher and the participants were asked to leave the hut. The account of what the spirit medium said to the family was obtained from the master of ceremonies after the spirit had departed. After a while, the spirit medium who was accompanied by the master of ceremonies got out of the hut in haste, shaking himself and groaning in a horse voice. At the edge of the homestead, the medium stopped, breathed deeply, stretched himself, sighed and returned into his normal state.

The younger participants looked afraid, became very curious, almost hiding behind others. Those participants who have had previous experience with A.R seemed to understand what was going on and followed closely to see what was going to happen. After spirit possession, family members and invited guest continued dancing, singing, drinking and eating. The researcher asked the master of ceremonies to allow the participants an opportunity to ask questions. This was granted. The table shows the participants and the questions they asked.

**Table 3: Questions asked to the Master of Ceremonies.**

Participant	Question
Jairos	<p>1. Does the name <i>bira</i> exclusively refer to this type of ceremony or to other traditional ceremonies in general?</p> <p>2. In what utensils was the millet put when it was dedicated to the ancestors?</p> <p>3. Why are young women and girls past puberty forbidden from</p>

	<p>Brewing beer?</p> <p>4. Why is beer poured onto the ground when one is dedicating it to the ancestors?</p> <p>5. How is the bull that is killed for meat chosen?</p>
Tarisai	<p>6. Should the bull to be killed be of a specific colour?</p> <p>7. Since the <i>bira</i> should be a peaceful ceremony, what is done to ensure that guests do not upset the peace?</p> <p>8. If one skips a name representing a generation when addressing the ancestors, what are the consequences?</p>
Cindiso	<p>9. Is it possible for many spirit mediums to be possessed on the day of <i>bira</i>?</p>
Esther	<p>10. If one is a spirit medium of many spirits, does one change voice when possessed?</p>
Lindiwe	<p>11. Is 'bira' the same as bringing home ceremony (kurova guva)?</p> <p>12. In our clan there is an alien spirit of witchcraft (uroyi) and prostitution (upfambi). Why do the ancestors allow this?</p> <p>13. If the ancestors are suppressed (kutsikirirwa), can their power be restored?</p>
Mushore	<p>14. How do family members ascertain that the spirit possessing their Kinsman is their ancestor's?</p>
Tafadzwa	<p>15. Is it permissible to kill a he-goat instead of a bull during <i>bira</i>?</p>
Heather	<p>16. Is it possible for the ancestral spirit to possess a young child?</p>
	<p>17. Do family members decide on their own volition to conduct a <i>bira</i> or are pushed by other factors?</p>
	<p>18. Is it possible for the n'anga to mislead the family on the need to have <i>bira</i>?</p>

The questions that the participants asked showed a good understanding of the phenomenological method. The questions did not seek to establish the truth or falsity

of the phenomena observed, but to seek understanding. This was probably a result of the lectures that the participants had with the researcher on this method of studying religion. Knowing well that the phenomenological method was a relatively new concept in teacher education, the researcher deliberately equipped the participants with the skills in phenomenological studies before fieldwork.

#### **4.7 APPLICATION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE BIRA.**

After fieldwork, the researcher and the participants returned to College and engaged in a practical exercise in which they applied the eight (8) steps of the phenomenological method to the 'bira' they attended. Cox's first three steps of the phenomenological method ( performing *epoche*, interpolating new knowledge into existing knowledge and maintaining *epoche*) involve internal cognitive and affective processes that manifested themselves from the way the participants opened up and were willing to attend and learn from the ceremony (Cox, op. cit: 26-32). Despite their Christian background, all the participants were willing to attend the ceremony and observe the phenomena.

Throughout the proceedings, they were keen to know and understand the phenomena. They asked many questions that were not value-judgmental or prejudicial. Flood (1996:98) correctly notes, "...the suspension of truth claims allows for pure description without the affirmation or denial of existence, and phenomenology becomes 'the attempt at value free description in religion'". This was an indication that the participants were trying to remove preconceptions and bias against A.I.R and open up to new knowledge through interpolation.

The researcher was aware of the complications in understanding what *epoche* involves but did not intend to go into detail about the question of what exactly it was that the participants tried to suspend. For instance, Van der Leeuw and Husserl cited in Flood (ibid:98) agree that epoche means bracketing of that which " lies behind appearances, not with the bracketing of subjectivity... epoche is not a denial of subjective faith or belief". Flood (ibid:108) asserts that inasmuch as phenomenology of religion wants to achieve an objective study of religion, " such an objectivism is not possible, first because subjects are always constructed within their particular narratives and within the wider historical

narratives of their cultures... and the knowledge of the subject arises within intersubjective networks of communication...”

He further argues that trying to understand the ‘other self’ through the phenomenological method is impossible since the method “ requires the bracketing of the ontological status of the other subjects...”(Flood, op cit:108) who are distinct entities with their own bodies, live in a particular location, history, culture and have their own perceptions. The participants experienced difficulties in trying to understand a foreign culture and to interpolate it into their own experiences, more so if they are expected to be objective about the phenomena. There was bound to be intersubjectivity in trying to understand the religious experience of the other which is foreign to the observer.

This leads Flood to the conclusion that the phenomenologist cannot use the subjective religious experience of the believer to arrive at an objective study of the phenomena. However, the participants showed empathy through their willingness to learn from the believers hence embarking on field work. Their attendance of the ceremony enabled them to learn religion from inside ( emic approach) as opposed to learning from outside ( etic approach).

The phenomenological method is largely descriptive and avoids questions concerning the truth or value of the phenomena. Flood (ibid:113) observes “ The recognition of the narrative nature of all discourse means that the phenomenology of religion... recognises the historical context of its own method...its limitations and...the narrative nature of the phenomena it claims to illumine”. In order to develop the skill of value free description of religious phenomena, the researcher and the participants engaged in an exercise of describing the *bira* ceremony they attended. Despite the problems of language and terminology, this was done fairly well as the participants avoided evaluative comments or value-judgments. The researcher was also impressed by the details of the descriptions of the phenomena and the chronology of the events.

As alluded to above, the limitation of language was observed in the descriptions. The participants had problems in naming the phenomena in vernacular especially among the Ndebele speaking participants for whom the Shona words had to be translated into

Ndebele. Even for the Shona speaking participants, some words were completely new while others differed according to the dialect of the participants. This problem was evident throughout the ceremony. Thus, language can be a hindrance in phenomenological descriptions especially where participants and believers are of different linguistic backgrounds.

The other limitation of the phenomenological method was on performing empathetic interpolation. Getting inside the religious experience of the believers may be hindered by many factors. “Barriers of culture, language and unexplained symbols may make the task extremely difficult” (Cox, op. cit:29). The problem of language has already been explained. As the participants were trying to interpolate what they were observing, they had to interpolate not only the phenomena they were observing but the culture as well. This makes this step a difficult exercise which, if not done properly may lead to misinterpretation.

In addition, when the participants tried to relate what they see to what they know, this implies that while *epoche* may have been performed, the participants did not go to the field ‘empty headed’. They had prior knowledge and experience which they were now using to get an understanding of the new religious experience. This prior knowledge may be a source of bias. Moreover, interpolation is an inward cognitive and subjective exercise used to understand the inner experience of others which may result in misconceptions. This may also imply that two or more people interpolating the same religious phenomenon may come up with different interpretations.

Studying religion from inside may also be hindered by the gate keepers who have the prerogative to allow or deny permission to prospective observers. The visit to the *bira* was facilitated by the student whom the researcher knew and was related to the family. For this visit and the visit to the traditional medical practitioner, the researcher had to personally negotiate with the elders of the family and the *n’anga* respectively and paid a token of appreciation. Thus, there is need for good interpersonal skills which are a prerequisite in social research especially in phenomenological studies (Howard et al., op. cit).

Depending on the nature of the ceremony or ritual to be observed, it may not be possible for the participants to observe all the phenomena for themselves. The preparations for the *bira* started a week or two before the actual ceremony was held. The participants could not witness the preparatory processes such as consulting the *n'anga*, dedicating the millet and brewing the beer. For these, the researcher and the participants had to rely on the account of the master of ceremonies.

The same applies to what transpired after spirit possession, when the rest of the guests were asked to leave the hut. The information delivered by the spirit medium to the members of the family was considered private and confidential and therefore not for public consumption. The family could not risk divulging family secrets or 'classified information' to strangers. Inasmuch as the observation method is critical to phenomenological investigations, the gate keepers may impose limits to access. In this case, the participants asked the master of ceremonies what the spirit medium and the family members discussed. It is very likely that the master of ceremonies selected and told the less confidential information.

The researcher also noted that participant observation was a challenge with all participants. This was due to several reasons. Three participants argued that their church doctrine teachers against participating in African religious rituals although they can attend for the purpose of learning. These are the same participants who refused to partake of food and drink for the reason that they have been dedicated to the ancestors. Due to their Christian religious beliefs, this group was comfortable to learn through observation. Three (3) participants who had previous experience with A.I.R wanted to take part in the singing and dancing but could not do so as they did not remember the songs, perform the dances and other proceedings. The frequency table below summarises the importance attached to the first three steps by the participants.

**Table 4: Frequency table showing importance attached to the first three steps of the phenomenological method.**

	NI	NS	I	VI	EI
1. Performing epoche	0	0	0	1	9

2. Performing empathetic Interpolation	0	0	2	3	5
3. Maintaining epoche	0	0	2	3	5

**Key:** NI = Not important

NS = Not sure

I = Important

VI = Very Important

EI = Extremely Important

#### **STEP. 4 DESCRIBING THE PHENOMENA**

The description of the phenomena in step four was done fairly well. The participants managed to recall the proceedings of the ceremony from the preparations, to the end of the ceremony. Due to the researcher's prior emphasis on the descriptive nature of the phenomenological method, the participants avoided making interpretations at this stage. However, the master of ceremonies' descriptions of the ceremony and its preparations assumed a lot of prior knowledge on the part of the participants. For instance, it was not clear why the millet was stored in a gourd, why the eldest member of the family assumed the role of a religious practitioner, why the hut and the *chikuva* were sacred places and why young women and girls still having their monthly cycle were forbidden from brewing beer. The master of ceremonies also assumed that the participants new the meaning of religious symbols, regalia and artifacts.

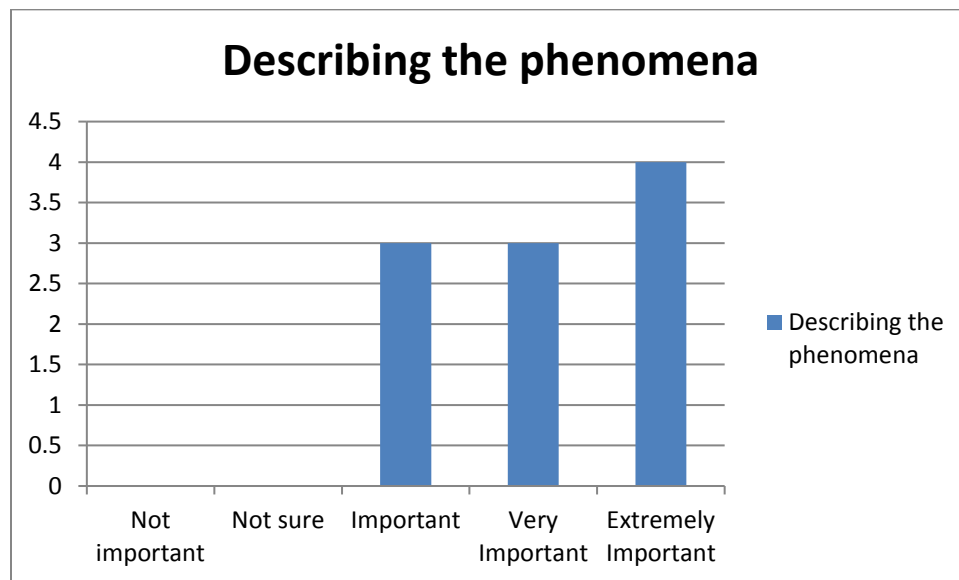
The participants who did not know the underlying meaning of the phenomena had to ask for clarification. This implies that prior knowledge is important in phenomenological investigations but this knowledge should be devoid of bias and misconceptions. Cox (op. cit:71) also notes, “ Although descriptions must not be interpretations, they need to be loaded with detail so that the reader can imaginatively see and feel the phenomena”. He further warns against “denotative or connotative



descriptions”. The underlying principle governing this step is to describe the data and not to interpret it. In addition, if judgmental words are used, then the phenomena should support their meanings (Cox, op. cit). Any interpretation that is not supported by the phenomena should therefore be avoided.

The participants’ perception of the importance of this step is shown on the bar graph below.

**FIG.1: Bar graph showing importance attached to step 4.**



## STEP 5. NAMING THE PHENOMENA

This step was done as a practical exercise at college. The participants were asked to list the phenomena in the preparation and the ceremony on pieces of paper in any order according to how they remembered. A lot of phenomena was mentioned for example the *n'anga*, people who consult the *n'anga*, the spirits consulted by the *'nanga*, millet, dedicating millet to the ancestors, the hut, *chikuva*, master of ceremonies, invited guests, pots, beer, gourd, women who brew beer, red cloth, black and white cloth, red,

white and black cloth, short hunting spear, long hunting spear, hunting axe, shakers, *magagada*, et cetera.

This is an important step in the phenomenological method as it enables the observer to perceive the phenomena and arrange it in some kind of order. However, it was not easy for the participants to name the phenomena since they could not remember some of the names. In order to help them remember, the researcher collected some of the phenomena from the traditional dance club and the languages department, displayed it in one of the lecture rooms and labeled them. Cox (ibid:71-72) correctly notes, “The act of ordinary perceiving requires that prior linguistic concepts be employed by the observer when he describes what he sees”.

During and after the ceremony, the participants asked the names of the phenomena as a way of perceiving them. Naming was more difficult for those participants who had not had prior experience in A.I.R and the Ndebele speaking participants. As with the first three stages, this problem also reveals the inevitable need of using prior knowledge and understanding which *epoché* tries to down play. Flood (op cit:101) argues, “Objects within the world are determined through the web of linguistically and culturally constructed meanings... rather than through pre-existing distinctions... (meaning) is intrinsically bound to the language of its expression”. According to the same author, the “insider discourse” and the “outsider discourse” may be hampered by the problem of language. An observer from a different linguistic background has to interpret and make some kind of judgments on the language of the adherents in order to make thick descriptions of the phenomena.

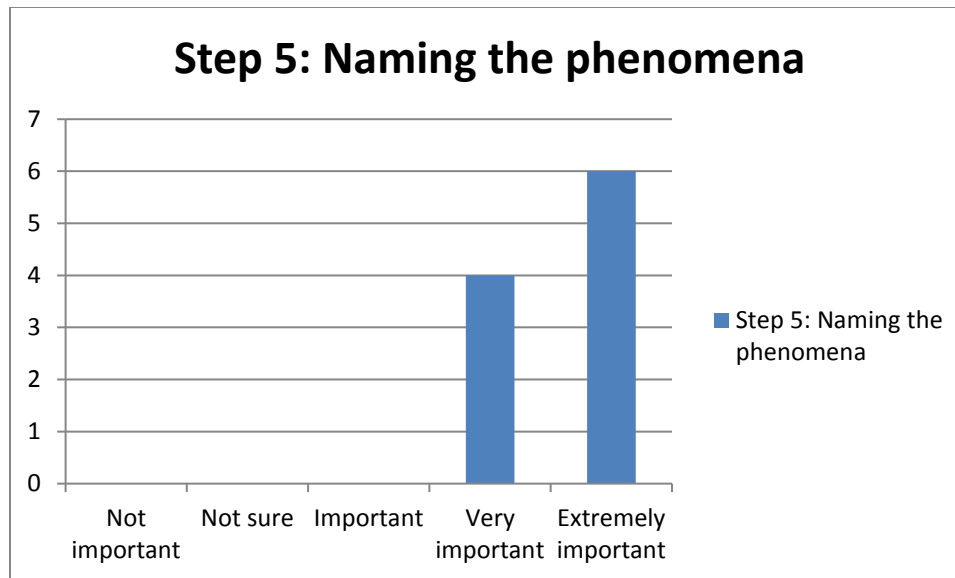
This step is a prerequisite for the other steps of the method. After naming the phenomena, the observer can classify them into groups of similar phenomena or categories. For this research, the researcher and participants identified the categories and then placed the various phenomena into the respective categories. As with the naming, these categories were drawn from the participants and the researcher’s prior knowledge and religious experience. The following categories were identified;

**Table 5: Categories of religious phenomena**

Category	Sacred practitioners	Sacred places	Ritual	Art	Beliefs	Morality
Phenomena	-n'anga -spirit medium -eldest member of the family	-hut - chikuva	Dedicating millet Dedicating and Presenting beer Dedicating the Beast	-songs -dance -cloth -wooden plate -different kinds of artifacts ( <i>tsvimbo</i> , <i>hari</i> , <i>gano</i> , <i>pfumo</i> , <i>ngoma</i> , <i>hosho</i> etc	That religious practitioners speak to the spirits & vice versa. That spirits commune with the living.	The living have an obligation to remember their ancestors. Bad conduct during the <i>bira</i> prevents ancestors from 'coming'

Once the phenomena are put into categories, it is easy for the observer to get the meaning of each category and the meaning of the various phenomena in the category. Through classifying and perceiving the meaning, “...the observer actively engages with the phenomena he is describing... and requires a creative interpretation of the material... which cannot be said to exist intrinsically within it” (Cox, op cit:75). Such interaction leads the observer to new insights concerning the meaning of religious data under study. The bar graph below summarises the importance attached to this step by the participants.

**FIG. 2: Bar graph showing importance attached to step 5.**



## STEP 6. DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES

Scheler cited in Flood (op. cit:91) discusses two types of phenomenology namely constructive and essential phenomenology. Constructive phenomenology is described as the original content of religious phenomena. Essential phenomenology considers the correlations in the phenomena. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the relationships and processes, the participants were asked to describe the ceremony together with the preparations in the chronological order of the events. The processes and relationships were inherent in the descriptions. As they did this, they were internalizing the ceremony and its phenomena. Some of the relationships and processes noted were;

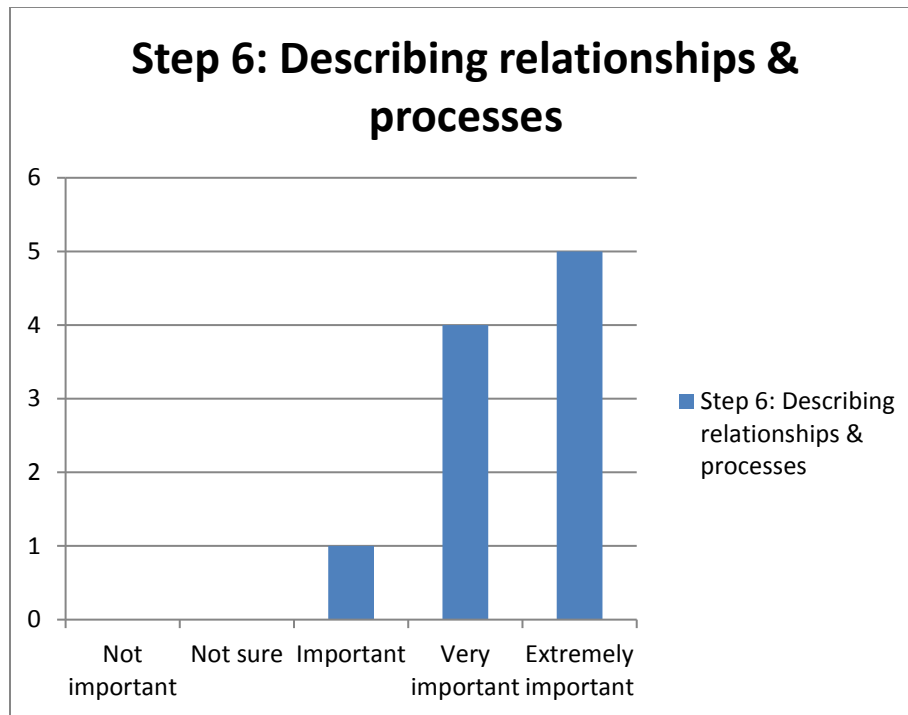
- A problem exists in the family which causes suspicion.
- The family delegation consults the *n'anga* who in turn consults the spirits.
- The *n'anga* informs the delegation what to do and the delegation in turn informs the other members of the family.
- Millet is dedicated to the ancestors by the eldest member of the family and the beer is brewed by old women.
- Beer and the beast are presented to the ancestors and there is eating, drinking, singing and dancing.
- The spirit possesses one of the family members who in turn addresses the family.
- Family beliefs are found in the rituals and songs.

- Dancing is related to singing, drumming, ululation and spirit possession. Eliade (1969:103) asserts that “ dancing is the most effective means of arriving at ecstasy or, at least, of coming closer to divinity”.
- Various types of cloth and snuff are related to spirit possession.
- Meat and beer are provided to the people as food and drink respectively *et cetera*.

Oral tradition and history are expressed in religious artifacts such as various types of regalia namely *nguwo* made from animal skins, red cloth for the hunting spirit, spear and *gano* used during hunting expeditions *et cetera*. Though these, Cox correctly suggests that phenomenology should not only concern itself with describing observations, but should try to understand religious phenomena “ within their cumulative traditions” (Cox, op cit:42) that is historical development. He therefore ( in line with Kristensen, Widengren, Bleeker, Eliade, Smith and Smart) argues that in phenomenology of religion, the observation method should be used together with the historical method. Thus, any meaningful discourse “ is governed by the wider historical context in which it is embedded...” (Flood,op. cit:104).

The bar graph below summarises the importance attached to this step by the participants.

**FIG.3: Bar graph showing importance attached to step 6.**



## STEP 7. CONSTRUCTING THE PARADIGMATIC MODEL

This step was not difficult for the participants since the phenomena had already been named and attempts to categorise done in step 5 ( Naming the phenomena). The categories identified in the previous step were used and attempts were made to perceive them as a universal model that could be used for the study of other religions. Flood (ibid:92) notes that the thrust of this step is “ in the idea of developing typologies of religion and religious phenomena, or the grouping together of diverse phenomena which share the same essence”.

Since the participants were Christians belonging to different denominations, they identified the same categories and phenomena that belongs to these categories in their denominations. The diagram below shows the categories and phenomena in A.I.R (the *bira* ceremony) and Christianity.

**Table 6: Paradigmatic model of phenomena in A.I.R and Christianity.**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Religious practitioners</b>	<b>Religious places</b>	<b>Ritual</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Beliefs</b>	<b>Morality</b>
<b>African Indigenous Religion</b>	- <i>n'anga</i> -spirit medium -eldest member of the family	-hut - <i>chikuva</i>	dedicating millet dedicating and presenting beer -dedicating the Beast	-songs -dance -cloth -wooden plate -different kinds of artifacts ( <i>tsvimbo, hari, gano, pfumo, ngoma, hosho</i> etc	That religious practitioners speak to the spirits & vice versa. That spirits commune with the living.	The living have an obligation to remember their ancestors. Bad conduct during the ' <i>bira</i> ' prevents ancestors from coming
<b>Christianity</b>	Priest Pastor Prophet Reverend Overseer Bishop	Church building <i>Sowe</i> Shrine	-prayer -baptism -confession -burial rites -marriage rites -Praying for holy water -drinking holy water	-Cross (plain & crucifix) -palm cross -Rosary beads -statue of Mary -baptismal candle - <i>mbiya</i>	Jesus is the son of God Jesus died for our sins If you confess, your sin will be forgiven -The wine and breadrepres	Sin separates man from God If religious practitioners become immoral, they lose their power

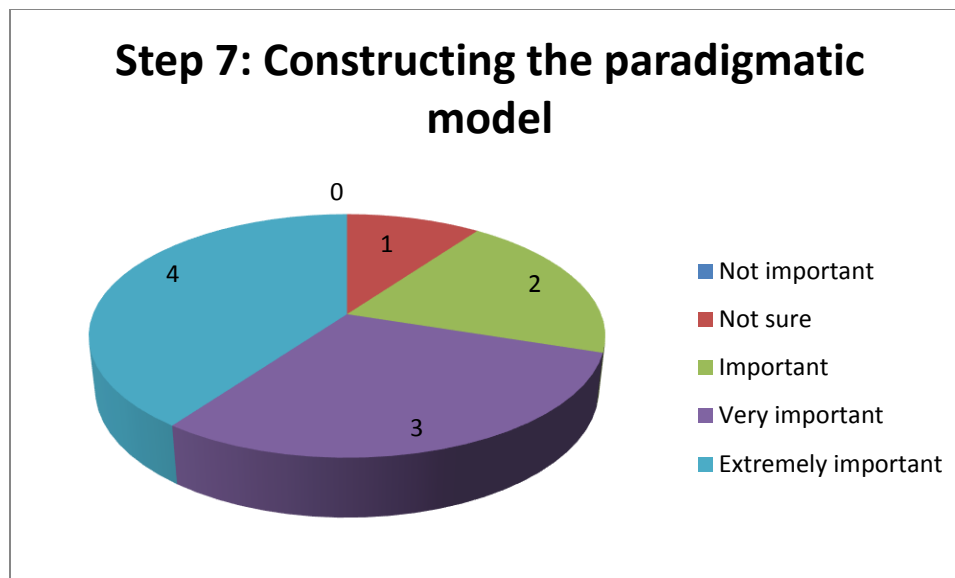
			from a clay pot - eucharist(ho ly communion )	<i>-nhombo</i> Shepherd's stuff ( <i>tsvimbo</i> ) Gown ( <i>gemenzi</i> ) -song & dance	ent the blood and body of Jesus - washing & drinking <i>muteuro</i> can heal & remove evil spirits	Doing good in this life leads to eternal life Doing bad leads to punishment in this life and after death <i>Muteuro</i> heals the sick &removes evil spirits
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Through the paradigmatic model, participants were able to see similarities between Christianity and A.I.R with regards to specific categories. This realization went a long way in changing the negative attitude of the participants to A.I.R as they realized that by and large, various religions are made up of similar paradigms. In addition, Cox (op. cit:38) notes, “ Although the same types of beliefs are found in every religion, the model helps us see in what ways their content varies, how that content influences the adherent’s experience of the sacred, and what type of rituals are emphasized to re-enforce those beliefs”. However, participants struggled to establish the relationship between rituals and beliefs.

The pie chart below summarises the importance attached to this step by the participants.

**FIG.7: Pie chart showing importance attached to step 7.**





## **STEP 8: INTUITING THE MEANING OF RELIGION: UNDESTANDING WHAT RELIGION MEANS.**

Husserl cited in Flood ( op.cit:105) considered intuition a significant aspect of religious phenomena. He argues that apart from cognition, intuition is “ the immediate ground of truth in which the self apprehends itself”. From the insights gained through the paradigmatic model, participants build up the meaning of A.I.R from the *bira* and the interaction with the traditional medical practitioner. The *bira* and the various phenomena associated with it, which was classified into categories helped participants see into the intentionality and meaning of A.I.R.

This was enhanced by the comparison of phenomena in A.I.R with that of Christianity through the paradigmatic model. Participants identified the essence of A.I.R as the desire of the living to communicate with the spirit world ( including the ancestors and the ultimate reality: Mwari) through beliefs, moral codes, religious places, religious practitioners, rituals and art for the adherents’ well being. Prozesky (1984) sees the essence of religion as ultimate well- being.

Cox (op. cit:37) argues that when the observer performs the eidetic intuition, the observer moves from a functional definition of religion that they have started with to a substantive definition which comes at the end of the phenomenological investigation.

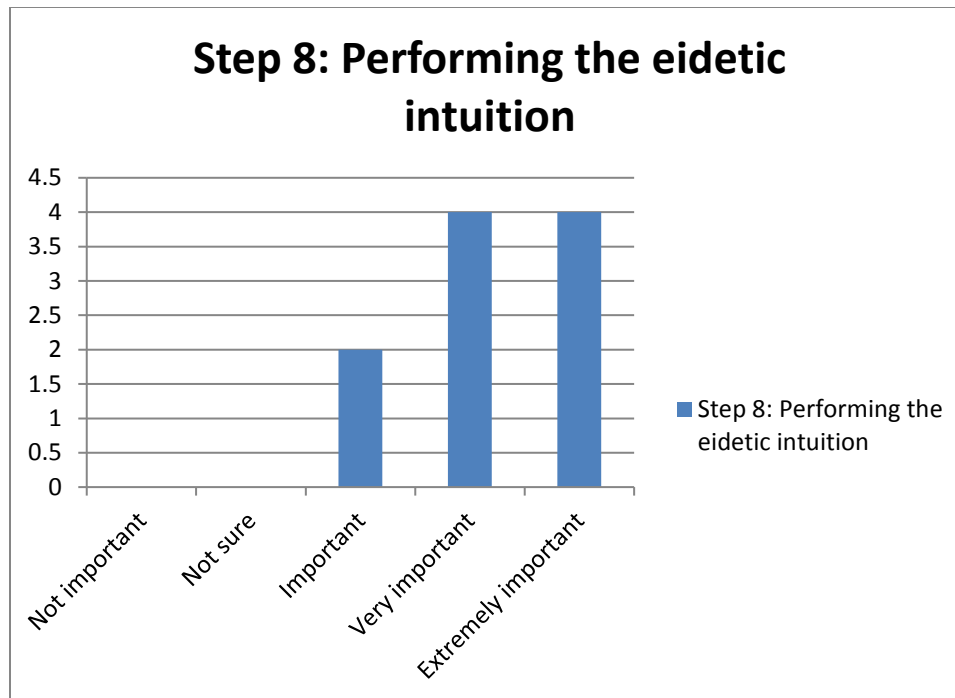
Such a definition is not obtained from scholars and their opinions but from direct experience and interaction with the phenomena. “This procedure (that is the phenomenological method) does not prescribe the content of any of the phenomena nor does it define the overriding principle of African religions, instead it offers a method of ‘seeing into’ them”(Cox, *ibid*:77).

Through developing insights into the essence of A.I.R and comparing it with Christianity, participants could generalize the essences to other religions and see A.I.R as a religion in its own right and place it in the context of religion as a universal phenomenon. Seen from this angle, the phenomenological method is a powerful procedure in fighting prejudice and ignorance on A.I.R.

Eliade (1959) identifies and discusses two categories of essences of religion namely the sacred and the profane with the sacred manifesting itself in the profane through hierophanies. For Eliade (1969:88-110), religious phenomena in its various forms enable the adherents to reach the sacred in their quest to regain the ‘lost paradise’ and experience utopia of the primordial time. For instance, the shaman (similar to the n’anga in A.I.R) “is a specialist of the ‘road’(to paradise): it is he who receives instructions which enable him to guide the tribe in its prodigious wonderings” (Eliade, 1969:109). Thus, seeing A.I.R through the spectacles of phenomenology helped the participants to define A.I.R and perceive it as one of the many manifestations of religion which is a universal phenomenon.

The bar graph below summarises the importance attached to this step by the participants.

**FIG.5: Bar graph showing importance attached to step 8.**



## STEP 9: TESTING THE INTUITION

This step was discussed by the researcher and the participants as a check of the validity and reliability of the findings. As has been noted before, the observer is required to revisit any of the steps of the method to see if the findings are consistent with the phenomena they try to describe. This entails going back to the field, the believer, or the phenomena. Flood (op. cit:93) refers to Husserl's famous phrase that phenomenology is "a return 'to the things themselves, a return to the data given in our experience or consciousness".

While this was a necessary step, it was realized that the adherent's personal feelings, sentiments and intense religious experience is difficult to bring back once it is gone. "...the phenomenologist can only approximate its meaning, which makes it imperative, but difficult, to test his eidetic intuition" (Cox, op. cit: 40).

Dhavamony (cited in Cox, ibid:40) notes that religious experience is difficult to verify or falsify because it is based on subjective religious data. For instance Rudolf Otto (1917) describes religious experience as consisting of the *mysterium*, *tremendum* and *fascinus*. As the believer tries to perceive the "numinous", he/she experiences feelings

of mystery, fear and excitement all combined into an experience difficult to explain. The ‘numinous’ brings “feelings of basement and prostration and of the diminution of the self into nothingness.” (Otto, 1917) cited in Noerenberg (2017). Religious experience quickly comes and goes so that even the one who experienced them may not describe them with specificity.

We noted how, after spirit possession during the *bira*, the spirit medium could not remember what he said and had to be informed by those who were present. It is the nature of religious experience that it is intensely personal and can best be understood by the one experiencing it. In addition to subjectivity, phenomenology of religion’s emphasis on consciousness is not important in religious experience. For instance, “the inner state of the possessed dancer is irrelevant” (Freeman, cited in Flood, op. cit:109).

Below is a frequency table showing the participants’ perception of the importance of this step.

**Table 7: Importance of step 9.**

	<b>NI</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>EI</b>
Step 9: Testing the intuition	0	0	2	3	5

Key: NI = Not important

NS = Not sure

I = Important

VI = Very Important

EI = Extremely Important

Despite its shortcomings, Flood (ibid:97) notes that phenomenological reductionism is very important to the understanding of religion as he writes, “Bracketing is central to

the proclaimed neutrality and objectivity of the phenomenology of religion, the reduction to essences has been important in the development of types of religious phenomena and empathy is a key feature in the enterprise of understanding the ‘religious other’”.

He further identifies and discusses three problem areas for the phenomenological method namely the problem of representation and language, subjectivity and bracketing and the problem of intersubjectivity (Flood, *ibid*:99-116). In the light of these limitations, he suggests a different approach to the study of religious phenomena. The researcher and the participants discussed these limitations in the light of the participants’ experiences during the course of this research with a view to establish the applicability of the phenomenological method among the participants.

#### **4.8 FLOOD’S PROPOSED PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION**

In the light of the limitations of the phenomenological method discussed above, Flood proposes the study of religion that is based on “semiosis rather than consciousness” (Flood, *ibid*:112). His justification is that religion can be perceived in terms of “sign systems as systems of signification and communication”. Jensen (cited in Flood, *ibid*:113) argues that the essence of religion is not the sacred but communication. His phenomenology emphasizes the narrative and places narrative language at the center of phenomenology of religion. The narrative should lead to active reconstruction of history “relating ‘facts’ to ‘plots’ in answering questions asked by the student of religion. The phenomenological descriptions are “translated into narrative or the organization of events” (Flood, *ibid*:114). He argues that when descriptions are located within narrative language, religion is perceived as temporal and contextual that is, it is understood in a particular context and time. Essences are not always sacred, but “something becomes sacred by having our attention drawn to it in a certain way” (Smith, cited in Flood, *op.cit*:114). For instance, the kitchen hut and the *chikuva* are not sacred outside the ‘*bira*’ ceremony. Many church buildings in Zimbabwe today are used for other purposes that are not sacred such as classrooms and wedding venues.

Through this approach, religious phenomena is not left to show and speak for itself. When religious data is located within the narrative, religion is not given priority and is perceived in the context of its culture and history. The student of religion who stands outside the religious tradition( such as the participants in this research) is able to dialogue with the religion this way. He argues that such phenomenology of religion overcomes the problem of subjectivity and places language and culture at the center of the inquiry.

While Flood's approach to phenomenology of religion seems plausible, it worsens some earlier writers' fears that phenomenology of religion waters down religion and reduces it to secular matters and mere culture. It is too relativistic and its respect for the believer's point of view may open flood gates of what is not religious to religion especially considering the many contradictions that may be found in a particular religion (Wright, 1993).

#### **4.9 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

After conducting lectures on the phenomenological method and a practical exercise on the method, lectures on spirit possession and the *n'anga*, the good and bad spirits, field work ( that is the visit to the *bira* and the *n'anga*), the researcher carried out a focus group discussion with the participants on a wide range of issues concerning teaching religions other than one's own, the phenomenological method and the ways to improve the College curriculum in order to enhance the students' understanding of A.I.R. At this stage of the research, the participants were in a better position to articulate the issues more comprehensively as a result of the various interventions already carried out. Below is a discussion of the issues raised.

##### **4.9.1 DOES TEACHING A RELIGION THAT YOU DO NOT BELIEVE IN COMPROMISE YOUR FAITH?**

Responses to this question were varied. Some participants argued that they have no problems teaching other religions other than theirs. As Primary School teachers, they are required to teach other religions namely Christianity, Judaism, A.I.R and Islam by the new FAREME curriculum. Thus, they distinguished between their commitment to personal faith and the expectations of their profession. These participants asserted the need for every teacher to take Religious Education as an academic enterprise in which teachers of different religious persuasions take part. The Schools Council Working Paper 36 (op.cit:27) passionately argues for this position when it notes that the school is an academic institution ( not a religious one) where educators should abide by the dictates of academic inquiry and not religious affiliation. Such attitude constitutes “responsible scholarship” which promotes an understanding of religion in its diverse forms and not a particular faith.

Other participants, while in agreement with the argument above added that if the teacher’s faith is strong, teaching other religions has no effect but if personal faith is weak, the teacher may be convinced to switch over to the other religion. When I asked them if there was anything wrong with abandoning one’s faith in pursuit of another as a result of new religious insights, the participants showed that they did not like to do so. This was an indication of how committed to their faith the participants were. The participants also argued that teaching other religions leaves the educator psychologically disturbed as to what true religion is. While the question of which religion is true or false is unnecessary to Religious Education, it is seems however, important to personal faith.

#### **4.9.2 DOES TEACHING A RELIGION THAT YOU DO NOT BELIEVE IN (FOR INSTANCE A.I.R) MAKE YOU FEEL GUILTY OF LYING?**

Some answers to this question were the same as answers to the previous question for example the need for strong faith, the need to distinguish between personal faith and the demands of the teaching profession especially that of the religious educator. In addition to these, the participants argued that if the teacher is widely read and researched, they will be convinced that what they teach is correct information therefore there was no need to feel guilty. Others noted that even if the teacher has widely researched, some concepts

and teachings of the teacher's religion may contradict with that of the religions being taught. Jairos gave an example of his church; the Seventh Day Adventist Church's perception of the ancestral spirits as alien spirits ( mashavi) which contradicts with the concept of ancestral spirits in A.I.R. He gave another example of some snakes such as the python which is associated with good luck and the ancestral spirits in A.I.R, yet a snake is a symbol of evil in Christianity.

He argued that these being the last days, teachers with a strong Christian background may feel compelled to tell learners the truth (that is what the teachers faith says.) He added that the studies and practice in the phenomenological method that they have gone through during this research were very important in equipping student teachers with skills and attitudes to overcome this guilty feeling. Through the paradigmatic model, they now know that A.I.R shares with other religions like Christianity many characteristics.

The members also noted the need for religious educators to adopt the right attitude and frame of mind conducive to good R.E, one of which is neutrality. If the teacher performs *epoche* in all R.E lessons, then the temptation to tell learners the 'truth' does not arise. The teacher will be willing to learn from the learners. Urging religious educationists to open up to various interpretations of religious experience, the School Council Working Paper 36 (op. cit:23) argues, "... it is vitally important that teaching in the field of religion should give major attention to alternative systems of belief and practice". The participants also concurred that the teacher should encourage critical thinking through questioning, exploring, critical inquiry and let the learners make their own decision in the light of new evidence.

Thus from question 1 and 2, it became apparent that teaching religion is a demanding enterprise which requires thoughtful, comprehensive and creative educational programmes that will produce a religious educator who is honest and sincere to the demands of academic scholarship, whether Christian or not. Religious educators should be able to make learners think openly about religion and discover its meaning in various contexts and cultures. In the next chapter of this research, the researcher will make recommendations as to how this kind of teacher may be produced.



#### **4.9.3 WHICH STEPS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD DID YOU FIND CONFLICTING WITH YOUR PERSONAL FAITH OR DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE?**

The steps that were commonly identified were steps one to four. On step one that is performing *epoche*, participants argued that it is difficult to set aside preconceptions and bias one had before embarking on phenomenological studies. Many years of Christian indoctrination have implanted in them certain ways of thinking that is in favour of their Christian denominations. While performing *epoche* and maintaining it are crucial, preconceptions remain domiciled in the back of the mind and may interfere with investigations. With little training and practice in phenomenological method, the new knowledge may even be ‘blocked’ by preconceptions so that the observer may choose what to observe, and how to observe it.

It has been noted how, earlier during the visit to the *bira* that some participants refused to take part in rituals and even to partake of the food due to the preconceptions they had as a result of their Christian faith. Despite this limitation, the participants agreed that learning from inside ( that is participant observation) was more informative than learning from outside. They also noted that some learners may not be allowed by their parents or religion to attend religious ceremonies outside their faith; even for learning purposes. Thus getting insider perspective or ‘going native’ while desirable, may not be easily achieved.

Various Christian denominations continue to exert pressure on members to cut ties with A.I.R. Esther explained how she is not allowed by the UAFC to take part in traditional ceremonies and rituals. They are not even allowed to contribute money or labour in the preparation for traditional ceremonies. They may not enter the premises where traditional ceremonies or rituals take place, eat, drink, join in singing, or clap hands for fear of possible contagion and possession by the spirits.

Heather, a member of JMAC and the traditional dance club at college related how her parents discourage her from taking part in traditional dance; something she is very keen

to do. William argued that as a member of the E T M church, he cannot participate in traditional ceremonies or partake of the food associated with such ceremonies. He gave an example that after the death of his father who had a great hunting spirit, his sister wanted them to take part in preparing a bringing home ceremony ( kurova guva) for him. He refused to take part but allowed her to organize the ceremony with the other willing members of the family. The Christian faith therefore continues to impose restrictions on its followers which make Christian student teachers unable to freely carry out participant observation.

#### **4.9.4 HOW CAN THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM IN R.M.E BE DESIGNED TO**

##### **HELP STUDENTS APPRECIATE A.I.R?**

Several interventions were suggested on this question. Participants suggested carrying out field trips to places of religious significance such as Great Zimbabwe monuments( south east of Masvingo city) and Matonjeni in the Matopo hills ( south east of the city of Bulawayo). The cultural village at Great Zimbabwe was identified as ‘one stop shop’ where students and tourists can see for themselves various religious phenomena in a traditional setting. They also suggested inviting resource persons who have first hand information to college. These two approaches help students see A.I.R as a living religion rather than depending on ‘bookish’ knowledge from library sources. “The information contained therein may just be taken as history,” Jairos noted.

The other improvements suggested were a deliberate emphasis on the multi-faith and the phenomenological approaches to all student teachers prior to the Teaching Practice stint. These approaches equip the student teachers with requisite skills and the right attitude necessary for R.E. Jairos gave a testimony of how his attitude to A.I.R was negative prior to this research, but has changed as a result of his involvement in this phenomenological study. He added that the encounter with the real phenomena has helped him ( and will help others) open up to A.I.R more quickly especially today where there is ‘ a war of religions’ whereby various Christian denominations are denouncing other religions especially A.I.Rs and trying to outdo them through miracles in order to win converts. He said when he went for Teaching Practice, his attitude to

A.I.R was so negative that he had to force himself to equip the science corner of his classroom with artifacts from African tradition.

They also suggested that since many students only hear about A.I.R and have not had contact with it, there is need to have a cultural village at the college. This should depict the facets of African life, culture and religion in a realistic way. It should be stocked with religious artifacts stored and maintained in proper traditional ways. From this cultural village resource persons would be invited to explain aspects of A.I.R in a more personal and realistic ways. Lectures on A.I.R can also be conducted in the cultural village.

It seems the participants were borrowing this idea from the schools where every school was required to have a culture centre. The centre is a typical traditional homestead with traditional tools, religious artifacts, attire, small domestic animals such as cats, chickens, sources of water, *chitara* (to dry washed utensils) et cetera. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced this concept in early 2000 after realizing that many urban learners had difficulties conceptualizing African culture due to lack of contact with it. It was also a way of keeping the traditions alive and relevant to education.

Chipinge Town Council is taking the initiative to commercialise the work of its local traditional healers who are thought of as the best in Southern Africa. Following the death of one of the most famous traditional healers the area has produced since antiquity; sekuru Ndunge, the Town Council is planning to build a culture village from where a traditional healer hired by the Council will help people from all over the country and the region. The Town Council secretary is quoted as saying the Town Council was looking for investors to assist it in establishing the village. In addition to helping people with various problems, this initiative will also attract “ spiritual tourists at the same time” ( The Daily News cited in Duta).

#### **4.10 NEW KNOWLEDGE LEVELS**

In order to assess the impact of the phenomenological method in increasing knowledge of the participants on concepts in A.I.R, the researcher asked each participant to make a

self evaluation of the level of knowledge they now possess on the concept of religious artifacts and attire in A.I.R and the confidence they now have in teaching the concept at various grade levels in the Primary School. The new Primary School FAREME syllabus (op. cit:8) requires them to teach this topic from grade three to seven.

On the whole, the participants expressed remarkable improvement on the knowledge levels and confidence on the identified concept. Below is a table showing the participants' perceptions of their prior knowledge level, current level and percentage increase.

**Table 8: Increase in knowledge after intervention.**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Prior level (%)</b>	<b>Current level (%)</b>	<b>Percentage increase (%)</b>
Tafadzwa	20	70	50
Esther	40	80	40
Lindiwe	30	80	50
Heather	25	98	73
Jairos	30	85	55
William	35	82	47
Cindiso	20	75	55
Mushore	30	85	55
Tarisai	25	85	60
Kudzaishe	20	80	60

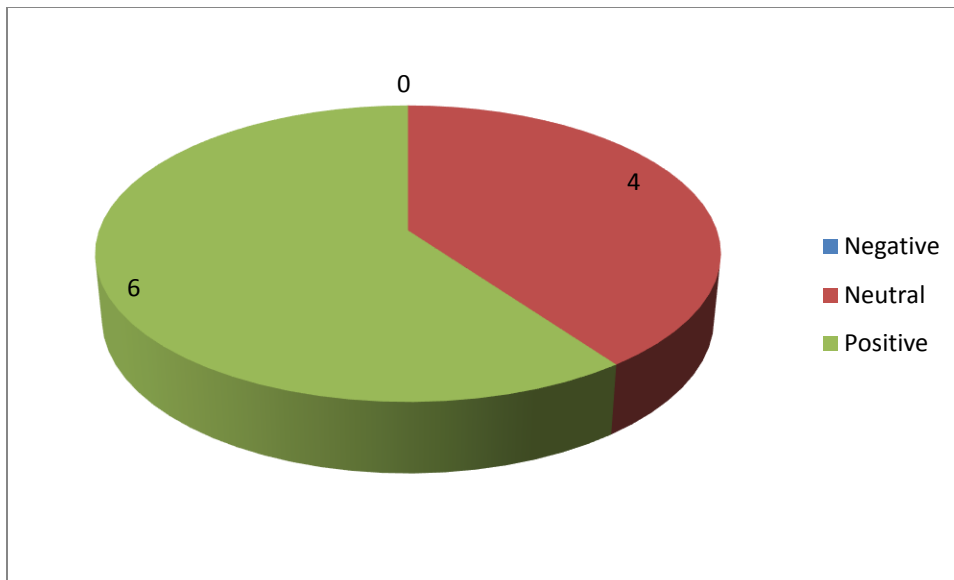
The table above shows great improvement in the increase of the participants' knowledge of the concept under review. It is encouraging to note that the participants who benefitted most are those who had not had prior experience in A.I.R namely Heather (73%), Tarisai (60%), Kudzaishe (60%), Jairos (55%), and Cindiso (55%). The least improved participants namely Esther (40%) and William (47%) belonged to A.I.R well into adulthood before their conversion to the Christian faith. On average the participants improved in knowledge by 54.5 %. It is reasonable to postulate that with more positive

attitude and practice in the phenomenological method, more knowledge will be gained. Behaviour and attitude change are process which takes time not an event.

Since this information is based on the participants' introspection of themselves, it is reasonable to argue that the phenomenological method can significantly improve the teaching performance of religious educators in the classroom. Clive et al. (op.cit.) note that lack of knowledge of subject matter and lack of certainty on the relevance of the subject material by the teacher limits the teacher from availing ample opportunities for learners to engage with religious phenomena. Yet according to Grimmit et al. (op.cit.) and Hull (2000) cited in Erricker et al. (op.cit: 25) religious artifacts, which they call the 'numena' ( borrowed from Eliade (1959) " ... is a gift for the child to engage with and learn from..." in developing their spirituality. Teachers cannot achieve this on their own, but need support from teacher education institutions through carefully and thoughtfully crafted R.E programs.

In order to examine the impact of the study in terms of changing the attitude of the participants to A.I.Rs, the researcher asked the participants the effect that the study has had on their attitude to the same religion. The participants were asked to select one of the three responses that best describes their current attitude to A.I.Rs from the following; negative, neutral, and positive. The participants genuinely expressed a change of attitude from negative to neutral and positive. Without going into detail about the meaning of the last two options to the participants, the researcher realized, upon probing that the participants chose these options to mean that while they do not believe in A.I.Rs and are still pious adherents of the Christian faith, they now think that there is nothing wrong with A.I.Rs. The pie chart below summarises the participants' attitude after this research study.

**FIG.6:Attitude to A.I.R after intervention**



It was encouraging that despite the short period of experimentation with the phenomenological method, at least a change of attitude had taken place. The method was beginning to stimulate in participants a critical examination of their long-maintained but unjustified beliefs against A.I.Rs and a self –reflective understanding of the beliefs and faith of others. Reasons given for this change of attitude were testimonial to the liberation and extermination of religious elitism and dogmatism through the phenomenological method. The participants were beginning to be guided by empathy, sensitivity, rationality and evidence as opposed to assumption and preconceptions ( as at the beginning of the study) in their study of the faith of others.

Even after the study, the participants continued to share information on religious phenomena in A.I.Rs on social media platform created by the researcher during the research. Lindiwe posted to the group her encounter with a religious practitioner in A.I.R and Christianity who had been called from Chipinge to the rural areas of Silobela to cleanse the area. The former participant, who was on Teaching Practice, interacted with the practitioner, asking him questions on how he became a practitioner, how he operates and his view on the relationship between Christianity and A.I.Rs. A full account of the chat in translated into the English language is on the appendices. Lindiwe admitted to the group that she learnt a lot from the practitioner.

This showed the researcher that the research project began and developed in his students an open, inquiring and critical attitude to religious phenomena. Through direct encounter with religious phenomena, the students were learning through practical experience rather than through theory and assumption. The students were beginning to be transformed from armchair academics to practical investigators with keen interest in religious phenomena.

#### **4.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented data collected through interviews, field work and focus group discussion. In order to assist participants understand the intervention strategy which in this case is the phenomenological method, the researcher conducted lectures on the method and how it can be applied. Cognisant of the challenges in understanding the method, the researcher tried painstakingly to simplify the method as much as was possible. This effort was necessary since the success on data collection largely depended on the extent to which the method had been understood in the first place. The researcher also held lectures on spirit possession and the *n'anga*, the good and bad spirits in A.I.R in a neutral and non judgmental manner as a way of preparing participants for these phenomena when they meet them during field work. The chapter discussed the merits and demerits of the method as encountered during field work. Despite its shortcomings, the phenomenological method proved to be a very helpful method in changing the participants' attitude to and knowledge of A.I.R as it enabled them to come into contact with religious phenomena in the same religion and make their own perceptions.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: OVERALL REFLECTIONS.**

## 5.1 SUMMARY

This research is a case study conducted at Mkoba Teachers' College from 2017 to 2019 which aimed at establishing the applicability of the phenomenological method in the teaching of FRMS and FAREME in Tertiary Teacher Education institutions in Zimbabwe. The majority of the student teachers were converts to the Christian faith and had a negative attitude to A.I.Rs. They also showed little knowledge of concepts in the same religions yet the old and new syllabus in RME and FAREME respectively required them to teach the subject using the multi-faith approach and to draw concepts from other religions such as A.I.R and to view all religions they may encounter in the classroom with equal importance. This research sought to change the student teachers' negative attitude to A.I.Rs and increase their knowledge of concepts in these religions through the phenomenological method, thus preparing them for the task of religious education in future.

The researcher discussed the concept of religious education and reviewed literature on R.E, approaches to R.E, the history of R.E in pre-colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe and recent researches in R.E in order to gain insights on historical developments and current trends in the field of R.E. The researcher selected ten (10) participants who belonged to various Christian denominations using the purposive sampling strategy, engaged in practical teaching where the concept of spirit possession, good and bad spirits, the phenomenological method were taught and discussed as a way of preparing participants for fieldwork. Having done this preparatory work, the researcher and participants attended the *bira* ceremony in Chiundura communal lands and visited the *n'anga* for the purpose of acquaintance with various phenomena in A.I.Rs. After field work, the participant applied the phenomenological method to the *bira* ceremony and discussed religious artifacts encountered during fieldwork. The research culminated in a focus group discussion on teaching religions other than one's own, the phenomenological method, current knowledge levels and the College curriculum.

Several challenges with the method such as logistical arrangements prior to the visit, reluctance by some participants to participate in the ceremony, problems of understanding a different language and culture, sanctions by gate keepers, difficulty in totally eliminating



preconceptions and maintaining religious neutrality were encountered. The participants also faced the problem of understanding religious language and symbols outside their Christian faith. While 'going native' is desirable in phenomenological studies, it was also realized that participant observation suspended the participants' own consciousness such that the participants could not study and participate at the same time. These skills required a lot of training and were rather difficult for beginners in the method. This also affected objectivity.

On the whole, the phenomenological method equipped pre-service teachers with the requisite skills, knowledge and the right attitude to A.I.Rs. Its descriptive and narrative nature made it easy for the participants to describe processes and relationships in the phenomena. It made the participants seekers of truth who question their own preconceptions.

## **5.2 OVERALL FINDINGS**

On one hand, this research revealed that the phenomenological method is applicable to R.E in Tertiary Teacher Education institutions and can go a long way in changing the attitudes of Christian student teachers. Through encounter and interaction with religious phenomena, the method can greatly increase the students' knowledge of A.I.Rs. On the other hand, the research also showed that the method is not a panacea to the problems of preconceptions, bias, religious dogmatism and fanaticism. These limitations do not mean that the method is of no benefit, but points to the need for further studies and investigations to improve it.

### **5.2.1 BENEFITS**

The method enables student teachers to avoid bias in trying to understand and teach the various religions of the learners and A.I.Rs in particular. It equipped them with the right attitude and frame of mind necessary and in line with current trends in R.E. It increased participants' knowledge of A.I.Rs through access to and interaction with the phenomena. Through the paradigmatic model and eidetic intuition, student teachers were able to see A.I.R as one of the other religions of the world that answers the adherents' spiritual needs. The essences arising from the paradigmatic model are the basis of many approaches to

R.E such as Trevor Cooling's conceptual approach (Cooling, 2000), Grimmit's approach (Grimmit, 1973:49), and the conceptual inquiry approach based on concepts important to believers (Clive et al., op. cit :65). The current FAREME syllabus is based on the conceptual approach and has key concepts that must be applied to the five religions to be studied in the Primary School. The participants were keen to be exposed to phenomena in A.I.R and to learn from religious practitioners thereby equipping themselves with primary data rather than secondary information.

Participants with some experience in A.I.R had more knowledge of this religion and more readily understood new concepts as compared to those who had no prior experience. Through the method, the participants were able to understand this religion from the point of view of the believers and so achieved some degree of objectivity in studying this religion. The method freed the participants from the limitations of Christian piety and religious dogmatism thereby making them appreciate the diverse religious heritage of mankind. Through the paradigmatic model (Cox, op.cit.) the participants realised that although religions share many dimensions in common, they are also different and unique, each in its own way (Horton, 2016). These many manifestations of religion should not be offensive to the student of religion, instead, it should be taken as valuable and indispensable sources of religious literacy.

The method also enabled the participants to realize that belonging to a particular faith (for instance the Christian faith) should not deter a student of religion from seeking an objective understanding of the faith of others. Through the phenomenological tools of epoche, interpolation, empathy and intuition (Cox, op.cit.), the student of religion can study other religions without endangering their faith; thus distinguishing between religious scholarship and religious piety. These tools resulted in critical thinking, avoidance of prejudice, subjectivism and reductionism, learning through enquiry and practical experience. The use of this method will inevitably result in R.E being a 'practical subject' studied through 'scientific' method.

### **5.2.2 LIMITATIONS**

Despite the numerous strengths of the case study approach, a case study is by its very nature limited in scope and execution. This research focused on a particular case that is Mkoba Teachers' College student teachers studying between 2017 and 2019, doing Main Subject and Professional Studies syllabus 'B'. The findings may not apply to the rest of the trainee teachers at the college and even at other colleges. This is more problematic when the sample is small as was the case in this research and case studies in general. The research topic was considered sensitive by many students who felt that participation will compromise their faith. Case study findings cannot be generalized to other populations other than the particular case. The data obtained in Case Studies is descriptive and has been criticized for lack of numerical presentation, thus making the findings' objectivity questionable.

It was discovered during this research that the concepts of the phenomenological method were difficult to comprehend and in some cases too theoretical and abstract for post ordinary level Diploma in Education students. These constitute the majority of the students studying for a Diploma in Education at the College. Some of the responses the participants gave reflected this difficulty. It was also difficult to completely get rid of preconceptions during the study. The preconceptions remained at the back of the mind and influenced the participants in the selection of phenomena to study, the approach to the phenomena and its interpretation. Thus the phenomena may not always speak for itself.

Moreover, the participants' access to religious phenomena was hindered by their commitment to the Christian faith which set limits on what they could participate in and partake of. A major limitation of the study was that all the participants were practicing Christians. Findings would have been enriched had the participants come from different religions. Although the student teachers wanted to distinguish between personal faith and academic inquiry, conflicts of interest occurred and in such cases, the students chose to obey their personal faith.

Thus, the participants felt guilty and did not want to betray their faith. Apart from limitations imposed by personal faith, access to some religious phenomena was denied by the gate keepers who exercised their prerogative on participants' access to matters

regarded as family secrets. Apart from limiting the insider view of the phenomena, it is possible that the family religious practitioner who informed the researcher and the participants what transpired after they were asked to leave the hut could have selected what information to divulge or to keep to himself. In such cases, it is likely that some believers may, for the sake of religious piety, present a biased picture of their religion, thus compromising objectivity and validity of research data.

Trying to understand phenomena outside one's religious experience was a challenge. The difficulty in understanding was more pronounced where language and culture of the participants were different from those of the believers under study. This was the case with the Ndebele speaking participants who had to rely on the researcher's translation. Interpretation of phenomena was also hindered by the lack of understanding of the culture and traditions from which they were coming. Religious language is figurative and ritual activity is largely symbolic making it necessary for the participants to understand these for better understanding of religious phenomena.

### **5.2.3 PLANNING AND PREPARATIONS**

Phenomenological studies need a lot of planning and preparation. The researcher had to identify in advance the rituals and ceremonies to be studied, the time of year they are conducted, establish whether they are carried out during day time or at night, make travel and subsistence arrangements. Good interpersonal skills were also required in order to negotiate with the gate keepers for entry and access to phenomena. The same planning and negotiation skills with College authorities were also necessary. Whilst fieldwork is desirable, such studies take time and need a lot of resources and commitment by both the researcher and the participants.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the findings of this research, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations;

- That the umbrella bodies governing religious organizations in Zimbabwe such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Federation of Indigenous Churches in Zimbabwe (FICZ) and the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) embark on deliberate program of preaching ecumenism among the various religious organizations so that the Christian church views other religions ( including A.I.Rs) as complementary so that ‘religious cold wars’ especially attacks on A.I.Rs may be abated and attitudes of Christians changed,
- That religious leaders in A.I.Rs organize themselves into an organization whose mandate would be to correct colonial and post colonial misconceptions, promote knowledge, understanding, the right attitude towards A.I.Rs and to map ways as to how A.I.Rs can keep up with modernity. Otherwise they may sink into oblivion. The death of traditional elders, who are the custodians of African culture, though a natural process and inevitable, is a major blow to A.I.Rs,
- That teacher educators use the phenomenological method in the teaching and learning of FAREME at Teacher Education institutions both before and after Teaching Practice,
- That Phenomenology of religion be included in the FAREME ( that is Professional Studies Syllabus ‘B’ course) and FRMS ( Main study) from first year of study through to third year in order to equip all student teachers with skills of the phenomenological method,
- That the FAREME college curriculum gives more prominence to skills in R.E other than syllabus interpretation, scheming and lesson planning,
- That Primary Teacher Education institutions create a conducive environment for the development of and skills in A.I.Rs through creating, equipping and maintaining an African cultural village with a bias towards A.I.Rs at each College,
- That Primary Teacher Education institutions embark on some kind of affirmative action to promote correct knowledge in and positive attitude towards A.I.Rs through directing resources towards field trips and fieldwork to places of importance in terms of these religions, invite resource persons to educate student teachers at the College and give A.I.Rs more time to showcase its tenets during College assembly,

- That supervision and assessment of student teachers in FAREME during Teaching Practice should deliberately promote the use of the phenomenological method in lesson delivery,
- That in-service Primary School teachers be educated in the method through workshops and in-service short courses so that as mentors, they keep abreast with current trends in phenomenology of religion and the phenomenological method. The mentors would also educate the student teachers in the use of the method during Teaching Practice,
- That the Curriculum Development Unit through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education produces literature on the method and include it in learners' and teachers' resource books to support teachers and learners in the use of the method.

#### **5.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

During the course of this research, it emerged that the main problem with A.I.Rs was that they are outdated and did not keep with the times. Some participants even argued that there was nothing intrinsically wrong about them since their fore fathers lived by them, but now they have been fulfilled, subsumed and overtaken by Christianity, which to them was fashionable. This position was very evident especially among the younger participants. Their negative attitude and lack of knowledge was a result of lack of exposure to A.I.Rs especially among those who were born in the Christian faith. Their attitude was not based on any prior experience but on hearsay, speculation and many years of Christian indoctrination.

There is need for phenomenological research on how A.I.Rs has adapted and are adapting to modernity in order to become and remain relevant especially among the younger generation of today. In the same vein, there is need to investigate how these religions can dialogue with other religions especially the Christian faith. In the wake of the insurgence and incessant attacks by some Christian churches, A.I.Rs cannot afford to sit on their laurels but defend themselves and make their existence known and felt. The long held assumption that as an indigenous African, one is born in A.I.R grows in it and dies in it, whether one likes it or not, can no longer stand the test of time.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

The study of religion is a complicated undertaking and demands that the student teacher acquires and employs the skills of disciplined inquiry and be in the right mental disposition to undertake the task. This cannot be left to happen on its own without the input of teacher education institutions. Teacher Education should develop and implement programmes that equip trainee teachers with professional skills in the field of religion so that the teachers produces can effectively deal with the ever changing area of R.E. Despite its limitations, the phenomenological method attempts to provide these skills and is in many ways applicable to Teacher Education in the field of R.E.

The need to remove preconceptions, study religion from inside, interpolate new knowledge into existing knowledge understand and empathise with the believer's perspective enables the student of religion understand and appreciate the faith of others. It frees the student from the confines of his or her own religious beliefs towards a broader, informed, and critical understanding of the religious experience of mankind. Adopting these skills and attitudes and cascading them to the learners in the classroom has enormous benefits to the learners, community and the nation. Phenomenology of religion is based on true and objective knowledge obtained through firsthand experience with the phenomena of investigation. It results in religious literacy and tolerance which are important ingredients of peace.

The religious background of the student teachers influence their attitude to A.I.Rs in many ways and leaves the trainee teacher in a dilemma on how to balance the requirements of the phenomenological method and the obligations and commitment of personal faith. This uncertainty can be cleared by the acquisition of skills in R.E and knowledge of the discipline. This calls for Teacher Education curriculum in the field of R.E to include content and methodology appropriate for this purpose. Discipline and professionalism in the subject requires the teacher to be neutral and not only appreciate the religious experience of the learners but also learn from it. This calls for the teacher to fight prejudice, misconceptions and accept religious pluralism.

Old habits die hard therefore training in the use of the phenomenological method should not be a once off undertaking but should be a continuous process so that even the more difficult skills of the method are gradually acquired and finally ingrained in the student's professional repertoire for better practice. Teacher Education institutions can make use of the already existing readiness among trainee teachers to learn through field trips and practical firsthand experience. Some students are also embracing critical thinking, rationality and are reflecting on their own beliefs and attitude to other faiths which make it easy for them to adopt new ways of thinking in terms of religion. There were encouraging indicators that with more training and practice in phenomenology of religion, Christian trainee teachers could differentiate between studying and teaching religion for academic purposes and engaging in the same activities for enrichment and growth in personal faith.

The use of primary data obtained through the phenomenological method and secondary data obtained through scholarly writings and researches can significantly change attitudes and increase knowledge about other religions. The problems with the phenomenological method can also be minimized by the use of this method together with the historical method. Religious phenomena can more easily be understood when they are placed in their historical context. Through the paradigmatic model (Cox, op.cit.), it is also evident that the phenomenological method can also work hand in glove with comparative religion as long as the phenomena and categories for comparison have been obtained through the phenomenological method.

Although many indigenous people uphold beliefs in A.I.Rs and practice them privately especially during life threatening situations, there is need for practitioners to craft ways of making these religions keep with the times in order to avoid extinction. The coming in of the new generation and the passing on of the older generation through birth and death respectively is posing great danger to their existence. In the scramble for converts by many religions and denominations today, A.I.Rs must also claim their share.

The country's religious organizations should promote ecumenism among member churches so that they abandon the confrontational approach against A.I.Rs. Ways of dialogue with these religions should be sought and genuinely pursued so that members of



various religions and Christian denominations do not feel compelled to exhibit a hostile attitude to A.I.Rs as a show of piety.

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[Accessed on: 20 August 2019]

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS**



1. How old are you?
2. What Christian denomination do you belong to?
3. Were you born in a family belonging to this denomination or you were converted to this denomination later in your life?
4. If you were converted later; for what reasons did you change denominations?
5. Have you ever believed or practiced African Indigenous Religion (A.I.R.) before either individually or as a family?
6. If you ever believed and practiced A.I.R, what were your reasons for leaving it?
7. Are there any aspect of A.I.R. that make sense to you?
8. What influences your current attitude to A.I.R?
9. As a Primary School teacher required to use the multi-faith approach in Religious Education, what is your current level of knowledge of concepts in A.I.R?
10. Why are you at this level?
11. How can your current knowledge of A.I.R be improved?

## **APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE TRADITIONAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONER**

1. How did you become a n'anga?
2. Do you like your job?
3. What problems do you usually attend to?
4. What instruments or tools do you use?
5. Are there any rules that govern your work?
6. Do you belong to a Christian denomination?

#### **APPENDIX C. QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Does teaching a religion that you do not believe in compromise your faith?

2. Does teaching a religion that you do not believe in ( for instance African Indigenous Religion) make you feel guilty of lying?
3. Which aspects of the phenomenological method did you find conflicting with your faith or difficult to practice?
4. What aspects of the phenomenological method did you find helpful in understanding concepts in African Indigenous Religions?
6. Is it possible to be neutral about religion (i.e. to suspend your pre-conceived ideas about African Indigenous Religions) in;  
(a) the teaching and learning process?  
(b) phenomenological investigations?
7. How can the College curriculum in Religious and Moral Education be designed to help Trainee teachers appreciate African Indigenous Religions?

#### **APPENDIXD.OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

**NAME OF PARTICIPANT:**.....

<b>ELEMENTS</b>	<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>
1. Willingness to go on field trip.	
2. Did participant prefer participant or non- participant observation?	
3. Gestures, remarks, verbal or non-verbal forms of communication that expressed negative or positive attitude?	
4. Knowledge of phenomena	
5. Willingness to interact with practitioners and artifacts	
6. Any other aspects of interest	

**APPENDIX E. PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT.**

## APPENDIX F. EVALUATING STEPS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD.

EVALUATE THE IMPORTANCE OF STEPS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD ON THE SCALE 1 TO 5  
PUT A TICK ON THE CATEGORY OF YOUR CHOICE TO INDICATE YOUR CHOICE

	1	2	3	4	5
	NOT IMPORTANT	NOT SURE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
1. GETTING NEUTRAL/ EPOCHE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. EMPATHETIC INTERPOLATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. MAINTAINING NEUTRALITY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. DESCRIBING THE PHENOMENA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. NAMING THE PHENOMENA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS & PROCESSES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. MAKING THE PARADIGMATIC MODEL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. MAKING INTUITION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. TESTING THE INTUITION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## APPENDIX G: APPLICATION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE BIRA CEREMONY

All official communications should be addressed to:  
"The Secretary for Higher & Tertiary Education  
Telephones: 795891-5, 796441-9, 730055-9  
Fax Numbers: 792109, 728730, 703957  
E-mail: [thesecretary@mhet.ac.zw](mailto:thesecretary@mhet.ac.zw)  
Telegraphic address: "EDUCATION"



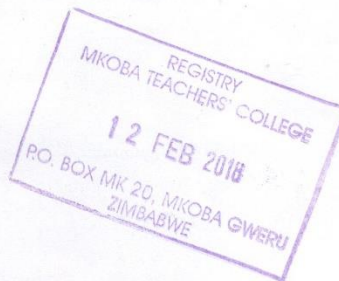
ZIMBABWE

Reference:

MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY  
EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT  
P. BAG CY 7732  
CAUSEWAY

07 February 2018

Mr J. Masango  
Mkoba Teachers College  
P O Box MK 20  
Mkoba  
**GWERU**



Dear Mr Masango

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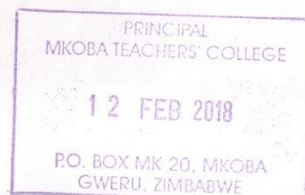
**RE: REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH ON "THE APPLICABILITY OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN TERTIARY PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF MKOBA TEACHERS": MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT**

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Reference is made to your letter in which you requested for permission to carry out a research on "**THE APPLICABILITY OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN TERTIARY PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF MKOBA TEACHERS**".

It is hoped that your research will benefit the Ministry and it would be appreciated if you could supply the office of the Permanent Secretary with a final copy of your study, as the findings would be relevant to the Ministry's strategic planning process.

P. Mavhondo (Mr)  
A/Director – Human Resources  
**FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY**



APPLICATION OF STEP 4, 5, 6, 7 AND 8 OF COX'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD TO THE BIRA CEREMONY.

STEP	OBSERVATION
4. DESCRIBING THE PHENOMENA (including occurrences, feelings, moods, tone within the phenomena)	During the Bira Ceremony older women who are above the age of having contact with men they are the ones who <del>are</del> <del>are</del> the beer ceremony. They also clap hands to invite their ancestors. Everyone present will be in a happy mood. Girls and women are the most involved one during the ceremony. They collect firewood and help each other in preparation of the ceremony.
5. NAMING THE PHENOMENA (use descriptions that do not distort, mislead, underplay the meaning of the phenomena or are diminutive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dums</li> <li>- Millet</li> <li>- Brewed beer (chero)</li> <li>- Bull cow</li> <li>- clay pot</li> </ul>
6. DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES	When its time old women clap their hands as they speak to their ancestors. They will pour the brewed beer on the floor. This is done in order to appease the ancestors. The chosen cur is poured with beer and it is then slaughtered and people will then eat the meat. After that they start celebrating inviting the ancestors to speak with them. These selected they got to the level of ecstasy as the ancestors start to speak via them. The older people will ask them who they are and the ancestors will say out the genealogy and they will start saying out what they are here for and they will tell them about the future ahead.

<p><b>7. CONSTRUCTING THE PARADIGMATIC MODEL</b> (making a pattern for the study of any religion)</p>	
<p><b>8. PERFORMING THE EIDETIC INTUITION</b> (the essence &amp; meaning of A.I.R)</p>	<p>Religions    Attire    Song    Artifacts    Religious Practitioners    Dance</p> <p>African Religion</p> <p>Christianity</p>



- talking w the elder (ancestors)
- the people brewed beer.
- old women (those who were beyond age of going to menstruation)
- they didn't touch anything without speaking to the ancestors first.
- clapping o hands and speaking b<sup>4</sup> performing any ritual.
- a eh pot was choosen to brew the beer
- meat w<sup>z</sup> also de<sup>re</sup> (cow) / goat - bull cow was used.
- happy ceremonies were done and they would go on for the whole night.
- black and white clothing
- Songs were sang during the ceremonies
- All the beer was drank in the same compound.
- Kusvikira (climax dancing)
- Elders spoke to the ancestors (vorenge vasvikira).
- The water given to the elders w<sup>z</sup> not ordinary water they added sm<sup>thg</sup>
- Everyone w<sup>z</sup> called including ch<sup>n</sup> & guidance.
- ey asked f<sup>r</sup> forgiveness
- ancestors did not want ppl z do bad things like prostitution
- ey w<sup>ld</sup> strike em with sickness, death, accidents, bad lucks.
- When do ey happen? once a yr
- Colour o e bull
- only one person will be expected.

4. Describe wat happens at ~~MB~~ira - ululating, drinking, eating happy mood, clapping o hands - who cooks e beer.

8. What z e essence o religion  
SAFA in relation z spiritual beings/faith.

5. dhuru, millet, drums, Gandise, ngoma, mumba  
6. from the first to the last.  
yng girls & old women (both clean)

7. paradigmatic - songs, food, sacrifices, pouring brew inside eh pot, religious artifacts  
Active | Song | Dance | Artifacts | ululating | rituals  
AR  
Chr

## APPENDIX H: SOCIAL MEDIA CHATS

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: How are you good people.yesterday we encountered a person who is a religious practitioner ( indigenous and christianity)username (spencho) and I had a chance to ask him on how he operates... Ndakadzidzazvakawanda.

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: He is from Chipinge and he had been called kuzogadzirisamamishaeriaround our school he said as he was a prophet of johanemarange .one day varikupasca he had a vision of at all lady with black hair who walked towards him and he started shacking speaking in unknown language by the people around( tongues) then after the church program he jus had a desire to go to a sacred river( dzivarinoyera) then that lady he had seen came to take him ndobvaaenda Paso pemvura

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: Hanzi I stayed there for long nambuyaivavovachindivigirachikafundakagarahangu n I asked kutimaidyeizvikanzi cooked food chaiyoMarice n chicken kunotongoitasengekunoku then time yanguyekutindidzokeyasvikaMbuyavayavakatumiramapowersekutihamadzangudziisemusoro pamwedzibikedorozvikaitikasaizvozvo.ndokuchibvavatichirongedzahembedzakonguvayakoy okudzekerayasvika

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: He also said that people think its demonic but they are wrong because everything comes from God and he created it for a good hanzidzimwenguvandotoshamisikakutindichishandiramunhunengiroziyangundotozongoona Mbuyavatopindira kana pachidamushonga.

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: Then vanhuvaridzangomandopakarovahanayangundobvandatarukandavepanzendiriparupasa that's how he then started kurapa using herbs.ndakamubvunzakuti where does he get herbs from zvikanz I dream ndotomukandichitorabadzandichinochera at tymz I go kumvurakunoitora

[10/23, 16:05] ChuruEsnath: Zvisineiakabvaafonerwa pane mwanawaaishandirakwakutangakurairakutivamugezesemvurayaangaavapandokubvaMbuyav ayavasvikaaripafonvakurairazvekuitaiyemurumeuyuMbuya ava

vanomutichisikanasosanavabvavakutindakutotumachisikanasosanamusiyemwanaiyeyeparwiz  
i ( CNT remember the name of the river)  
chisikanandodakutichimugezeipaponekupertzisabasairi.ndobvaangobudapanze and in a  
kuzomuonakutiakaendepi so munhu waive nayetakazomubvunzakutitodiakatipa phone  
number yakeakatiano zotipa number dzaspenchowacho because  
arikutodzokerakuchipingenhasi

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

How are you good people? Yesterday we encountered a person who is a religious practitioner (Indigenous and Christianity) username (Spencho) and I had a chance to ask him on how he operates....I learnt a lot. He is from Chipinge and he had been called to cleanse the homes around our school. He said as he was a prophet of the Johane Marange Christian church, one day when we were having Easter celebrations, I had a vision of a tall lady with black hair who walked towards him and he started shaking speaking in unknown language by the people around (tongues) then after the church program he just had a desire to go to a sacred river (sacred pool) then that lady he had seen came to take him under the pool.

He stayed there for a long time with the old lady bringing him food. I asked him the type of food he ate whilst under the pool. He said he ate cooked food consisting of rice and chicken. Though under the water, the place is just like a normal place on the land. When it was time for me to come out of the water, the old lady sent her powers to my relatives to work together and brew beer. They did that.

The old lady told me to pack my clothes as it was my time to go back. He also said people think its demonic but they are wrong because everything comes from God and He created it for a good. Sometimes I am surprised that when I am healing people during church service, the old lady comes and helps me heal the people with traditional medicine. When beer was brewed, people were beating drums, that's when I just found myself outside the pool, sitting on a mate. That's how I started to heal using herbs. I asked him where he got the herbs from. He said he is shown the herbs in dreams so that he wakes up and takes a hoe to fetch the herbs. Sometimes he gets them under the water( that is under water bodies)

As we were taking, someone called him on his mobile phone concerning a sick child he was attending to those days. He told them to bath the child with the water he had given them. As he was talking on the phone, the old woman possessed him and started to instruct him how to heal the child. The old woman calls the man little girl Sosana. The old woman said she was sending the little girl Sosana. She instructed them to leave the child by the river ( I can't remember the name of the river). I want the little girl to bath the child in the river to complete the job of healing the child. The man suddenly got outside and I did not see him again. We asked the person who was with him his phone number because he is going back to Chipinge today.